

Til it's Gone

by midnightjen

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Summary: There's that saying "you never know what you've got until it's gone". Well, turns out, Nick isn't ready for it to be gone.

Sequel to Two Steps Forward.

1. Chapter 1

****a/n: ****This was supposed to be another one-shot but, well, everything that needed to be said just wouldn't fit in one reasonably sized chapter so now you'll get five parts. This story (which follows Two Steps Forward) will mark a turning point in Adalind and Nick's relationship which should mark for a change in the tone (for the most part) of this series. There'll be less angst going forward (less, not none) which i'm really looking forward to. Thank you all so much for the support with this series, please let me know your thoughts at the end.

****'Til it's Gone - Part 1****

With his back to Renard's office, Nick couldn't see anything of what was going on in there without turning around and making it really obvious he was watching. Given who Renard was meeting with, having a Grimm staring through the window probably wasn't the wisest choice so he was relying on Hank's ability to monitor the situation out of the corner of his eye while he pretended to get some work done.

It was just that actually getting work done was next to impossible when a known member of Black Claw was within reach and, worse, at his back.

Just thinking about her eyes drilling into the back of his head gave him chills and he had to fight the urge to leap to his feet, burst into the office and take her back to HW where Eve would torture every last bit of information out of the redhead.

Thankfully, Wu saved him from doing something so stupid when he walked up and held out a piece of paper with an address on it. 'Car accident,' he supplied helpfully, 'With a possible side of murder and kidnapping.'

Nick snatched the paper from Wu's hand, grateful for the distraction. Five more minutes and he couldn't guarantee he'd keep a safe distance from Rachel Wood. Abducting her to get answers would certainly help them solve the question of Renard's loyalties and it would serve the dual purposes of getting them answers about why Black Claw was so interested in Renard playing happy families with Adalind.

Because that had to be about Diana, right? There was no reason Black Claw would care about who was mayor of Portland, how was that considered a significant win for them when they'd be better off pulling Renard's strings as a Royal? That was a fight Nick imagined Renard would happily join forces with Black Claw to win.

Renard had proven time and time again that his only true loyalty was to himself and Nick doubted after years of plays and manoeuvring, Renard was happy to sit back and let Viktor slide into the role of King. The very fact that Renard hadn't mentioned anything about the Royals lately was disconcerting. Nick was so used to their little power games spilling over into his life that the reprieve was unsettling to say the least.

Honestly, with the news the King was dead, Nick would have expected things to heat up not settle down. He couldn't imagine Viktor was the only member of the Royal family asserting power. Eric and Kenneth had both been strong players and given how many Royals seemed to creep out of the woodwork the silence was definitely worrying.

But that was something to worry about later, right now he had an accident with a possible side of murder and kidnapping to deal with.

Hank pulled up behind Wu and another patrol car at a busy intersection. Traffic was doing their best to redirect angry drivers but the area still looked more like chaos than a controlled scene. The line of emergency vehicles cordoning off the intersection blocked Nick's view of the actual scene as he and Hank stepped out and met up with Wu who was talking to a uniform guarding the scene.

'What have we got?' Hank asked and Wu turned, notebook already out and open to a fresh page.

'White delivery van ploughed through a red, T-boned the car passing through the intersection. Driver of the van died instantly but here's where things get interesting. According to witnesses, a black SUV pulled up on scene and four men got out. Witnesses say they took the woman from the car the van hit.'

Nick's eyebrows shot up. That didn't sound like the usual traffic incident and he could see why they'd been called. Sounded a little too professional, van used to T-bone the car and then a second vehicle abducted a woman from the vehicle.

Wu issued an order to the uniform and the three of them rounded the barricade of emergency vehicles to get their first look at the scene. For a moment all Nick could see was shattered glass and crumpled

metal and plastic and then he actually took in the details. The white van had hit the passenger side of the smaller grey car, pushing it off course and onto the sidewalk where it had taken out a couple of tables from a café on the corner.

Nick opened his mouth to ask a question and then his brain finally caught up with what his eyes were seeing. He was moving before his brain had finished issuing the order to his feet.

He recognised that car.

'Adalind!'

He reached the car in seconds; the driver's side looked clean and almost undamaged, barring the scratches and dents in the door panels where the car had struck the tables. Both the driver and rear passenger windows had been smashed. He reached the driver's seat first, knowing what he would find before he looked inside.

No Adalind. He'd known, even as he'd desperately looked she wouldn't be there. Wu had said the driver of the car had been taken. Frantic now, he searched the backseat but with a sinking heart saw the carrier in the back was empty. He spun away from the car, colliding with Hank who had run up behind him.

'Kelly!' he half shouted, half demanded. 'Kelly!'

'Nick!'

Nick spun at the sound of his name and saw Wu hadn't followed them to the car, he was standing at the open back doors of an ambulance. Nick ran, heart pounding in his chest with fear of what he might find. He sagged against Wu in relief when he found his son safely nestled in a blanket in the arms of a teenage boy wearing a t-shirt with the café's logo on it. Kelly seemed a bit distraught but was otherwise unharmed.

'Kelly.' Nick reached desperately for his son, pressing him close to his chest and just breathing him in. No one spoke for several moments, giving Nick the time he needed to calm his racing heart. Kelly was safe, he was unharmed and he was safe. Right in that moment, the relief that Kelly was alive and safe was enough that Nick could take a deep breath, open his eyes and think.

'Adalind?' he asked, fearing the worst. He knew what the witness report had said, knew what the uniform and Wu had passed on when they reached the scene, he'd seen the empty drivers seat for himself but he needed to hear it again, needed to hear the whole story now that he understood who was involved.

Wu shook his head. The boy, still seated in the back of the ambulance spoke up, 'They took her, dragged her right out of the car.'

'They?' Nick questioned sharply. The teenager seemed to understand the sharpness wasn't directed at him and so he nodded easily before going into more detail.

'There were four of them, dressed in black and they had these masks, they looked like monsters.' The boy shook his head and rubbed his arms as though to fight off a chill. 'They smashed in the window and

dragged the blonde out of the car. I've never seen anything like it. It was like something out of a movie! She was kicking and punching them " man, she killed one of them, I didn't see how but he just dropped " and then one of them jabbed her with a needle and she stopped fighting them. They shoved her into the back of an SUV and drive off.

'It happened so fast; we didn't even know what was happening and then after they'd gone we heard the kid " Kelly? " crying and I had to smash the back window to get him out.'

Despite the warmth radiating from Kelly, Nick had gone cold. Fear was fast being replaced by fury and it must have shown on his face because this time the teenage boy shrank back from him.

'I'm sorry we couldn't stop them,' he said nervously, 'I'm sorry we couldn't save your wife.'

Nick didn't correct the assumption, just nodded and turned to face Hank and Wu. His voice, when he spoke, was ice cold and all Grimm. He wasn't afraid now, he was furious, furious that a group of wesen had targeted Adalind, that some unknown group had risked the life of his son and dragged Adalind out of her car and taken her to god knew where.

'I'm going to find the people who did this and I'm going to kill them.'

Hank called Rosalee while Nick started taking statements and talking to witnesses. It was a little tricky to do with Kelly held tightly in his arms but the look on his face left no room for argument. Everyone gave him the same basic course of events.

Adalind had been moving into the intersection when the van had hit her. The momentum of the hit spun her car slightly and drove it sideways through the intersection until it had hit the curb and come to a stop after cleaning up a number of tables at the corner caf  . All of the witnesses said the same thing after that, before they'd been able to overcome their shock and go to Adalind's aid, a big black SUV had pulled up and four men (dressed in black and wearing animal masks) had gotten out and pulled Adalind from her car.

Every witness he spoke to told him how hard she'd fought back, how they were pretty sure she'd killed at least one of her attackers before they'd bundled her into the SUV and sped off.

The fact that she'd managed to kill one of the men would have been a comforting thought if he weren't worried about the kind of payback they'd try to deliver.

None of them had even realised Kelly was in the car until after the SUV left and he'd started to cry. Nick got the feeling that had been Adalind's doing. He got the feeling she'd been using her newly returned powers to keep the men from noticing Kelly, he didn't think she'd have had so much trouble with the four men if she hadn't been focused on something else.

If he focused on how dangerous Adalind could be then it was easier to do the job. If he could remind himself how capable she was then he didn't have to think about how he might not find her until it was too

late. Adalind had a lot to fight for and she never gave up easily. Nick would find her and when he did she would be alive.

She had to be. He refused to accept anything else.

He stayed away from the bodies of the van driver and the would-be kidnapper while he still held Kelly. He had to trust that Hank and Wu knew what they were doing and would find every clue there was so they could find Adalind faster.

Because they would find her. They'd find her and he'd take her home and he'd hold her and Kelly until this whole thing became just a nightmare.

He couldn't seem to stand still. When he stopped moving, stopped working then he had to think about what Adalind might be going through. He had to think about why they might have taken her and what they might be doing to her. Did they want information? If they wanted something from her did that mean they were going to torture her? Why take her? Was this about Adalind or about him? Or even Renard?

No he couldn't think about that just yet. He wouldn't.

He'd just decided to search the car when he heard Rosalee shout his name in a frantic voice. He looked up and waved to the uniform to let her through. He was surprised to see Monroe wasn't with her and realised she'd probably been at the shop when Hank called.

Alarmingly, when she reached him and gripped them both in a tight hug, he found his throat closing up and tears threatening. His son was safe, he had to remember that, Kelly was safe and he would find Adalind.

'Can you take him?' Nick choked out, gently handing Kelly to Rosalee.

He hadn't even needed to ask, Rosalee took Kelly and held him close, looking up at Nick with wide eyes that were filled with so much fear he had to look away. 'Adalind?' she asked in a low voice, placing a gentle hand on his arm.

'They took her.' He coughed, like that would clear the lump from his throat and looked at her, showing her every bit of the determination fuelled by fury he was feeling. 'Take him to the loft where its safe. I'm going to find her.'

Rosalee looked like she wanted to say something more, something intended to comfort him but she thought better of it. Instead, her expression hardened, turning slightly feral as the fuchsbau threatened to shine through.

'You'll find her,' she told him firmly. 'I'll keep Kelly safe.'

Nick placed a final kiss on Kelly's head and then turned to focus all of his attention on the scene. He started with Adalind's car, feeling a brief flash of amusement when he realised she'd be happy to learn they'd have to get her a new one. She hadn't said anything, hadn't had to, he'd known how much she hated driving Juliette's car and thinking about that one spark of happiness helped him focus on

finding Adalind.

Because he would find her.

There was glass on the floor on the driver's side from the window and more on the ground outside where it must have fallen when she was pulled out of the car. There was a huge dent in the dash that looked like it had been caused, not by the crash, but by a kick. He could picture it in his head, how Adalind would have tried to get away, even as they'd pulled her backward through the window. She would have been fighting to save herself and keep their son hidden.

He tried to handle on the driver and rear passenger doors and found them firmly locked in place. The impact had jarred the frame enough to jamb the doors. He'd leave it up to CSU to get into the car but he leaned in through the window to get a closer look. He couldn't see any blood and that gave him hope that Adalind hadn't been hurt in the initial crash.

He spotted her cell phone wedged between the seat and the middle console. The thing was likely covered in his prints anyway, but he still reached for it only after slipping on some gloves. Back on the sidewalk he unlocked the phone (not even considering what is said about their relationship that he knew the passcode and she knew the one to his phone) and flicked through the call log. All of her outgoing calls were to him or Rosalee with just one to Monroe and for the most part the same could be said of incoming calls but with the addition of four calls from Renard. None of those calls lasted more than a few seconds and they were weeks apart.

He took them to be the calls he'd made each time he'd tried to convince her to play at being a family. Nick knew for a fact the only reason she'd taken the last call and gone so far as to meet with Renard was to find out once and for all what Renard wanted.

Given that Nick had gotten word from Meisner that Diana was somewhere in Europe with a Resistance family â€" well and truly out of Black Claws reach, for the moment at least â€" the last meeting Adalind had with Renard had been a waste of time.

The second attempt at blackmail might prove useful in the future, however, and Adalind was all for using it to take Renard down a notch or two. Given how mad she'd been about the whole thing, Nick wouldn't be surprised if Renard's death suited her just fine.

There were certainly days where he felt that way.

He got distracted for a moment when he flicked through her list of contacts and discovered there were only eight contacts listed and one of those was Kelly's doctor. He hadn't realised how isolated she was, he'd known of course, that she got lonely sometimes, but seeing the evidence of how few people she interacted with caused the lump in his throat to return.

The photo she'd assigned for him nearly pushed him over the edge. It wasn't one he'd ever seen before; he didn't even know when she'd taken it. It was a shot of him, lying on his side in the middle of their bed with Kelly sleeping tucked securely against his chest. He was as asleep as Kelly, one arm splayed across the bed, the other cradling Kelly. Even in the photo he could tell he was exhausted,

easy to understand why he'd never noticed Adalind taking the photo.

Her phone was full of photos like that, shots of Kelly playing, more of their son with Rosalee or even Monroe and plenty of ones with Nick and Kelly. She even had a few of herself that Rosalee must have taken of her and Kelly and one that must have been Monroe's work because it showed both Rosalee and Adalind lying on the floor with Kelly between them.

The lump in his throat tasted of guilt this time. He had a few photos on his own phone of Kelly and a couple of him and Kelly but anyone picking up his phone would see no evidence Adalind was a part of his life. The thought made him sick. It was just another one of those things that snuck up and punched him in the gut.

He didn't think of things like that, never thought to snap moments of Adalind and Kelly or even just Adalind now that he could (sort of) acknowledge she was more to him than just Kelly's mother. He didn't have a cute shot of Adalind on his phone for when she called "not that he had one for any of his friends" but staring at the evidence of how much a part of her life, he was, Nick felt like he'd somehow betrayed Adalind by not thinking of those things.

He flicked through her photos again, slower this time, and chose a dozen that he sent to his own phone. He didn't consider how it looked to the people working the scene, him standing there on the sidewalk staring at her phone and then his own. He just waited for the message tone to sound and chose his favourite, assigning it to Adalind's contact.

Because he would find her.

'You doing okay?' Hank asked him, appearing suddenly by his side and causing awareness to flood back to Nick.

'I didn't have any pictures of Adalind on my phone.'

He wasn't looking at Hank, so he didn't see the strange look on his partner's face. If he had, he might have hated the sympathy he saw there.

'She definitely put up a fight,' Hank told him. 'Driver of the van died on impact, no ID yet, his prints aren't in the system and he didn't have any ID on him. The van was reported stolen from a catering service last week.'

Nick nodded to show he was listening and pocketed his phone before carefully sealing Adalind's in an evidence bag that he handed off to one of the guys from CSU who moved in to start looking over the car for evidence. 'I'm going to want that back,' he told him sharply.

'The second body, also no ID and no prints, looks like he died from a broken neck. ME's preliminary says it's not consistent with a fall and doesn't exactly make sense given the witness' description of the fight.'

At this point, Nick probably should have mentioned the return of Adalind's powers but while he found it nothing to worry about and he

knew Monroe and Rosalee had accepted it Nick wasn't sure how Hank would feel. He didn't know a lot about how Hank felt about Adalind but now just wasn't the time to find out.

'Wu's got uniforms canvassing the area and pulling surveillance from the businesses around the intersection. There are three traffic cams on this intersection too, hopefully they got us enough to ID our kidnappers.'

Nick nodded again. The fury was starting to ebb and in its place was numbness. Numbness and guilt. Why hadn't he made more of an effort? Why was it always Adalind who had to take the steps in their relationship? Why hadn't he done anything about her loneliness when he knew how much she hated being stuck in the loft?

Working occasionally at the Spice Shop when Rosalee needed an extra set of hands wasn't enough. The problem was, Nick didn't really know how to help her. He wasn't exactly a stellar example of friendship. Once he'd become a Grimm he'd practically thrown aside all of the relationships he'd built over the years. He never spoke to any of the friends he'd had before his Aunt Marie had died and he'd definitely made a choice to avoid the friends he'd shared with Juliette. That way led to some really awkward questions he had no way of answering.

When he really thought about it, did he have any more contacts in his phone? If you took away all of the numbers related to work (not including Hank and Wu) then he was left with the same numbers as Adalind: Monroe, Rosalee, Bud and Kelly's doctor. Trubel's number in his phone didn't work anymore and he wasn't about to count Renard as a friend.

The only difference was, Nick interacted with people on a daily basis. He was constantly in contact with people he worked with, witnesses, people from the lab and evidence. Even when he wasn't, when he was working as a Grimm he encountered wesen, both good and bad.

Adalind didn't have all of that; she didn't have that exposure that might help her make more friends.

As depressing as the realisation was, it did make Nick feel slightly better. 'Let's head back to the station,' he said finally, casting one last look over the scene. 'I want to start looking through surveillance and I want to see if Monroe and Bud know who our kidnapper is.'

Hank nodded, he looked like he wanted to say something, maybe ask again how Nick was doing but he, thankfully, kept from doing so. Nick didn't think he'd be able to handle the question right then and he wanted to get the hell away from the crime scene before someone started questioning whether or not he was fit to work the case. There was no way in hell he was going to sit this one out.

Because he would find her.

Back at the station, Nick didn't even make it to his desk before Renard was poking his head out of his office and calling all three of them in. 'Shut the door,' he ordered Wu, seating himself behind his desk.

Nick had always hated the feeling of talking down to Renard, it gave the mistaken impression they had some sort of control over the situation.

'What do we know?'

Hank filled him in, Nick wasn't sure he could have gotten through a report without letting his feelings get in the way. Hank, although he was mad, could still be objective. To him, Adalind was just the mother of Nick's child and the woman who'd once tried to kill him. Thankfully, the former overrode the latter these days in Hank's mind. He hoped.

'Any ID on our kidnapper?'

'Not yet,' Hank replied. 'None on the driver of the van either.'

'Nick,' Renard spoke directly to him for the first time, 'Do you have any idea who might be behind this?'

Nick shook his head, it wasn't that he didn't have any idea, it was that he had too many. There were simply too many people who would like to get their hands on Adalind. Black Claw, HW, the Resistance, the Royals, not to mention a slew of random wesen she'd pissed off along the way. And that was only taking into account the people or groups who might have taken Adalind because of who she was not because of who she lived with.

The list of people who might try to use Adalind to get to him was just as long and likely included a lot of people he'd never even met before who wanted him just because he was a Grimm and rumoured to be in possession of a number of Keys.

Renard sighed. 'Alright, keep me informed.'

It was only when he was back at his desk trying to put together a list of Adalind's enemies and one of his own that he realised Renard had not once asked him if he was okay. There'd been no question about Nick's ability to continue doing the job without his emotions getting in the way. And he was sure it had nothing to do with him believing Nick was capable of setting aside his feelings.

No, Renard hadn't asked because it honestly hadn't occurred to him that Nick would care. To Renard, Adalind had and always would be, a means to an end. He honestly didn't see how much Adalind had changed, how much she'd grown and not just because she was a mother now. The knowledge that Renard didn't seem any more concerned about Adalind than if it had been a perfect stranger who had been taken, rather than make Nick mad, reinforced his feeling that Adalind deserved so much more than he'd been able to give.

And that wasn't something he'd ever have thought he'd feel about Adalind. But, well, he was doing a lot of that lately. Little touches that seemed so natural, pulling her close when she sank into a nightmare, holding her hand when he led her somewhere, all of these things he'd started doing without even really being aware of it. All the little things and more that he wanted to keep doing with her, that he would keep doing with her.

Because he was going to find her.

He called Bud and sent his friend the photo of the dead would-be kidnapper. As much as he'd liked Juliette, Bud had sort of bonded with Adalind those weeks she'd been staying with him and so when he found out someone had kidnapped her his response was a lot more what Nick felt Adalind deserved.

'Are you okay?' Bud demanded and then before Nick had even formulated a response he rambled on, 'No, of course you're not okay because someone took Adalind and you have no idea who. Why would you be okay after that? Is Kelly okay? Boy, he's probably missing Adalind already and without even having any idea what's happening. You'll find her Nick, you will. And we'll help, I'll show this photo around and we'll find her, don't you worry.'

'Thank, Bud.'

When he hung up, still thinking over the list of potential suspects, Monroe walked in. He hurried right over to Nick's desk, looking genuinely concerned and when his first question was to ask if they'd found her yet, Nick had to resist the urge to hug his best friend. No one else had thought of Adalind first, well Rosalee might have but when she'd seen Nick her concern had been for Kelly. Monroe's honest worry just reinforced how glad he was to have Monroe in his life.

Nick had no doubt he'd never have made it this far without the blutbad.

'How can I help?'

Nick scrubbed a hand over his face and sighed. 'I've got Bud asking around, seeing if anyone recognises this guy.' He slid the freshly printed photo across the surface of his desk at Monroe. His friend picked it up and studied it closely. For one moment, Nick hoped his friend recognised the man but the feeling fell away almost before it had begun to set.

'I'll ask around, too,' Monroe promised. 'I know a rougher crowd than Bud and most of his buddies are used to.'

'Footage from the traffic cams just came through,' Wu announced, stepping up with his iPad in hand. 'You sure you want to watch this?' he asked Nick.

'I need to see it.'

All four of them leant forward to watch the footage and Nick's stomach lurched as they watched Adalind's car move away from the lights and into the intersection before she was slammed into by the van. Nick hated to think how scared she must have been, how terrified for Kelly it would have left her.

Wherever those men were holding her, did she know Kelly was safe? Wherever she was, did she know he was coming for her? That he wouldn't stop until he found her?

Because he would find her.

'Here comes the SUV,' Wu murmured and they watched as, onscreen, a bulky black SUV sped up to the crash site, four figures in black got out and moved to take Adalind. Nick wished the footage was better quality but wasn't sure he wanted to see the fight up close. They watched as one of the men fell and the other three struggled with Adalind until she went limp and they ran back to the SUV, stuffed her into the backseat and sped out of there.

'Traffic got us a good shot of the plates and they were able to follow the SUV for another four blocks before they lost it. Back track is about the same.'

'The plates?' Nick asked.

'Registered to Anita Oberman, an eighty year old grandmother of nine, they belong to an ancient sedan that spends most of its life in her garage. Car's still in her garage but I thought you might want to check it out.'

Nick nodded. 'Got the address where the van was stolen from?'

Wu nodded and after a moment of scribbling in his notebook, tore a page out and handed it to Nick. 'I'll keep combing through CCTV from the surrounding businesses, see if I can't get us a better picture of those men.'

'Won't do us much good if they're woged,' Hank pointed out.

'It'll tell us what type of wesen we're dealing with,' Wu countered.

Hank tilted his head, acknowledging Wu's point.

'Call us if you find anything,' Nick requested, glancing between Wu and Monroe. 'Anything.'

'Hey,' Monroe said gently, 'We'll find her man.'

Nick smiled tightly and left with Hank. He had to believe Monroe was right, refused to believe differently.

Because he would find her.

2. Chapter 2

****a/n: ****Thank you everyone for such wonderful reviews! Unfortunately, it refuses to let me actually respond to them at the moment. Have a new chapter! Its fun being in Nick's head because this whole fic is intended to sort that mess out once and for all.

****'Til it's Gone Part 2****

Nick woke surrounded by the scent of Adalind's shampoo and for a moment, just a moment, he forgot. When he reached out to draw her close he found her side of the bed cold and empty. Reality crashed down on him and in that moment, with fear making his heart race, all he could do was press his face close into her pillow and breathe her in.

The owner of the van hadn't been able to tell them anything more than they'd already gotten from the initial report and Anita Oberman hadn't even noticed the plates had been pulled off her car. The basic make and model of the SUV had turned up too many results and, though they were working to narrow it down, it could take them days to run and crosscheck the owners of those with people he and Adalind might know.

Wu had managed to get a clean image of the men exiting the SUV and they were circulating the photos through the wesen community as best they could. The picture clearly showed them in wesen form and was going to be no use to anyone else. Someone, somewhere, would recognise one of the men in the photos. They had to; Nick wasn't willing to consider the alternative.

It had been late when he'd finally come home and even then, the only reason he'd stopped working was because he couldn't face the thought of leaving Kelly alone without either of his parents. Of course, that hadn't stopped him from doing more work from home. He'd studied the CCTV footage, he'd combed over the list of potential enemies Adalind had " the ones he knew about " and he'd looked over his own again and again in the hopes that something would leap out at him.

Nothing had, there were just too many possibilities. He'd made phone calls, calling on every wesen he knew, going back over all of his cases, using every means he had to spread the images they'd obtained from the CCTV footage through the wesen community of Portland.

Bud had checked in around eleven to let him know he'd had no luck but he and his wife were spreading the picture and the message to everyone they knew. Monroe didn't call it a night until some time after one, he'd hit up every bar he could think of but no one recognised the dead kidnapper, or if they did they weren't willing to talk about it.

Which, Nick hated to admit, was a distinct possibility. Just because no one was talking, didn't mean someone out there hadn't recognised the photo, it just meant they weren't willing to talk about it. Nick just hoped his reputation as a Grimm " the friendly version the eisbiber's got to see or the violent one the criminals encountered " would work in his favour. He had to hope someone would come forward, even if they did it in a round about way, through a friend of a friend or an anonymous email. Jesus, at this point Nick would have taken a clue by carrier pidgeon.

He couldn't say exactly when he'd finally fallen asleep, it must have been somewhere around 3am, but he was awake now and he didn't know what he was supposed to do. This wasn't just any other case, this one mattered, Adalind mattered, mattered more than he had ever realised and Nick didn't know how he was supposed to deal with that either.

Kelly woke then and it pulled him out of bed. He went about their morning routine, the absence of Adalind like a gaping wound, until he and Kelly were dressed and ready for the day and he was once again left with the feeling of not knowing what came next.

He couldn't just follow the clues on this one, couldn't just get up and go to work and take it one step at a time. That wasn't enough, he

wasn't doing enough, he should have found Adalind yesterday. He should have been able to narrow down the list of suspects and find her, bring her home.

He hadn't. God, he hadn't been able to do anything. Yesterday there had been a kind of momentum behind his actions. Everything was fresh and new, every bit of information he gathered had a potential new lead. Today, today there was only yesterday's failures and the fact that Adalind still wasn't home.

Like Nick, Kelly felt the loss keenly. He'd slept restlessly, cried himself to sleep twice and now he wouldn't settle in his carrier. Nick wished he could express how he was feeling in such simple and obvious ways but he couldn't. He had to hold it together for their son and hang on to the fading hope that something would suddenly click and they'd be able to find her.

He didn't like this feeling of hopelessness, wasn't used to it. He especially wasn't used to feeling it where Adalind was concerned. He'd once felt something similar when he'd thought he'd lost Juliette (back when Adalind had put her in a coma) but he didn't remember it being this bad, this unbalancing.

He felt off centre, like his whole world had been tipped fifteen degrees and his mind couldn't quite catch up with the change in reality.

With no other idea of what to do and unable to stay in the loft, Nick packed up Kelly's bag and went to work. When Hank came in an hour later " a full hour and a half earlier than normal " Nick was working quietly at his desk with Kelly sleeping fretfully in his carrier on the desk beside Nick's computer.

Hank didn't seem in the least bit surprised. 'How's he coping?' he asked Nick quietly, leaning over Kelly to check on him.

'Badly,' Nick said bluntly, looking up at Hank with bloodshot eyes. 'We didn't get much sleep last night.'

Hank nodded in understanding but Nick wondered if he understood the whole meaning of his words and not the just the face of them. It was perfectly reasonable to assume that Kelly's restless night could result in Nick's restless night but it wasn't necessarily the case. Nick couldn't quite bring himself to care, either way. Hank would take his words as he wanted and whether or not Nick was feeling Adalind's abduction on a more personal level was something Hank would either understand or he wouldn't, it didn't really make much difference.

Nick was just thankful they were all looking.

The preliminary results came in from the lab just before nine and Nick hastily scoured the results for something he could use. He wasn't sure what he was expecting to find but it wasn't the photo of a small slip of paper found in the lining of the dead kidnappers coat. It certainly wasn't the symbol drawn on it in red ink.

'Uh, is that what I think it is?' Hank sounded as surprised as Nick felt and had obviously just reached the same page in the evidence catalogue as Nick had.

'Wesenrein,' Nick confirmed.

'I thought we arrested those guys?'

Nick nodded, he thought they'd done a pretty good job of permanently disbanding the hate group and even if there were still a few members out there what would they want with Adalind? As far as anyone knew she hadn't betrayed her kind and even if they did know about Kelly, Nick wasn't sure being in a, whatever they were, with a grimm was enough to set up some elaborate kidnapping.

No, something about that didn't feel right.

They were still trying to make sense of it, and every other bit of useless information that had so far come out of the lab, when Renard walked in. Being a Captain was apparently a 9 to 5 job these days, even when the mother of his child was missing and potentially dead.

Lack of sleep and anger on Adalind's behalf might have been making Nick less than accepting of Renard's behaviour.

'Nick, Hank, any luck finding Adalind?' Just the way he asked the question set Nick on edge. Where was the concern? Where was the worry? Why was he speaking like this was something that happened every day?

How had he so completely failed to notice how badly Nick was handling this whole situation? Seriously, he was exhausted, actually looked it for once, and his kid was sitting on his desk trying to snooze away the knowledge that his mother wasn't around. How was Renard not picking up on the tension Nick was feeling?

While Nick was busy clenching his jaw and willing Renard to burst into flames, Hank spoke up, updating Renard and generally just filling the silence until Renard headed for his office and Nick felt like he could breathe again. There was the definite chance he'd punch Renard in the face when all this was over, if only because he was a power-hungry dick.

Some of that feeling might have been the lack of sleep talking.

Rosalee came to collect Kelly at 10; they'd be spending the day together at the Spice Shop. She took one look at Nick and knew exactly how badly he'd slept and exactly why. Her sympathy was genuine and for more than just a Kelly induced lack of sleep. Her look didn't feel heavy, didn't feel like it was full of expectations or scorn like it might have coming from someone else. It was just what it was: understanding and support.

It caused the lump to form in his throat again.

'ID on the van driver finally came through,' Wu declared, sliding Nick's keyboard to the side so that he could bring up the results on screen for everyone to see. 'Larry Connor, reported missing four days ago by his wife, Loraine.'

'The driver was reported missing?' Nick said in surprise.

Wu nodded. 'Final labs came back on him too, there was bruising around his wrists and ankles that suggests he was restrained for a length of time. He was showing signs of dehydration, too.'

'So whoever took Adalind first kidnapped this guy, held him for a few days and then forced him to crash the stolen van into Adalind's car?'

'That's the way I see it,' Wu agreed.

They needed to know more about Larry Connor and they needed to talk to his wife. Was he just a target of opportunity, someone who could be easily taken and manipulated or had they taken Connor for a reason? And why even take him? Had they chosen someone else because they knew he was going to die? Had his entire purpose in this been to strike Adalind's car or was he someone this group wanted dead?

Why were there so many more questions piling up and so few answers? Seriously, knowing the driver's identity only helped so much. Then again, maybe they'd get lucky and the driver would be the key to everything. He could hope that was the way this went, right? Even though, given his luck and the gaping chasm of suck his life had been over the last few years, that seemed really unlikely.

For therapeutic reasons, he kicked the side of his desk as he stood and put his jacket on. Hank looked at him and raised a questioning eyebrow but didn't otherwise comment. Nick didn't think it really needed an explanation.

He was frustrated, scared, angry and there was always that undercurrent of guilt because he hadn't been the kind of whatever (boyfriend? Partner? Significant other?) Adalind deserved and, given the people she'd had in her life until he'd come along, desperately needed.

Had he ever once told her how much she meant to him? They'd talked a bit about their relationship but not in a way that made it seem like they were in one. She'd told him how she felt and he'd assured her that he cared about her but not in a way that offered assurances, not in any permanent way. Telling her that when he thought about the future she was in it didn't really clarify how exactly he imagined her in that future.

Why was it so hard for him to admit how he felt? Why couldn't he just accept what was happening between them as easily as she had?

What if he never got the chance to tell her?

Lorraine Connor took one look at them through the screen door of her tiny home and burst into tears. In that moment, Nick felt like he could relate. 'He's gone, isn't he?'

'I'm so sorry,' Hank murmured.

Lorraine Connor sank to the floor, huge sobs shaking her whole form. She didn't once wince so it was obvious they weren't dealing with wesen here. If the news her husband was dead didn't cause a grief-fuelled slip, Nick doubted there was anything to see.

Carefully, Nick pulled the screen door open and crouched to help the woman to her feet. She was surprisingly pliant, in spite of her sobs, and Nick found it easy to guide her into the nearby living room and down onto the couch.

Hank slipped into the kitchen and returned quickly with a glass of water. 'I'm Detective Griffin and this is Detective Burkhardt,' he belatedly introduced them. 'Is there someone we can call for you?'

Nick sat with her, offering what comfort he could while Hank stepped out of the room to contact her sister. Nick hated this part of the job on a normal day but sitting there on the sofa of the woman who's husband had helped abduct Adalind, all Nick could think was that in a few days time it could be him sitting on some couch hearing the news that Adalind was dead.

Only, would anyone even think to comfort him? Would anyone realise the true depth of his pain?

He should have been thinking about the questions he wanted to ask Loraine Connor but instead he was desperately hoping this wasn't Adalind's fate.

Why couldn't he just focus? Why couldn't he just zero in and do the job, wouldn't that work better at distracting him? Wouldn't that narrow focus be better for finding Adalind? If he could just focus on the job, on following the clues and asking the right questions then he would find Adalind.

Then he could tell her. Then he would tell her.

The sister must not have been far away because it only took five minutes before she was bursting into the house calling frantically for her distraught sister. Loraine's sobs, which had been quieting, became huge, body heaving wails when her sister pulled her into her arms.

Nick sincerely doubted the wife was going to be much use to them but the sister might be able to give them some answers.

'Can you tell us when your brother-in-law went missing?' Nick asked, trying to be as gentle as possible when all he was feeling was impatient.

If he'd been hoping having answers to such basic questions would help, he was proven wrong. The sister-in-law hadn't known any more than was on the initial missing persons report and the additional information the wife gave them once she calmed down enough, gave them no hint as to why her husband might have been taken.

As far as they could tell, Larry Connor was a perfectly ordinary guy. He had a boring 9 to 5 job working in the accounting department of a small advertising firm. He'd simply left the house to go to work one morning and never arrived. The original detectives assigned to the case had walked Connor's usual route to work, asking the businesses and the neighbours if they'd seen anything and come up with nothing.

Of course no one had seen anything, that was just the way this case was going. CCTV caught Connor at a couple of spots along the route but then on the corner before his usual bus stop, he'd simply vanished.

Once they'd gotten all they could from Loraine and her sister, Nick and Hank drove Connor's route to work in the hopes they'd see something everyone else had missed. There were plenty of houses along the route, plenty of neighbours, but a second pass proved just as useless as the initial canvass. At that time of day, people had been too focused on getting to their own jobs or getting their kids ready for the day to notice what was going on down the street.

They stopped at a deli to pick up lunch and Nick found himself remembering the first time he'd made Adalind a sandwich and how he'd learned then that she was allergic to raw tomato. It seemed like so long ago, that conversation that had started out so awkward but had in a matter of seconds become so easy.

He was so sick of second-guessing every action, of worrying about what his friends would think. He'd said that once before and he thought he was doing a pretty good job of showing Adalind that he meant it but what if it wasn't enough?

All of the _what ifs _circling around in his head were driving him crazy because there was the chance that Adalind wouldn't come back from this and that those _what ifs _were all they'd ever have.

Hank didn't comment on his obvious distraction and Nick wasn't sure that was a good thing. Did his friend not feel like he could comment? Or was he so confused by Nick's hot/cold behaviour and the mystery surrounding his relationship with Adalind that it was just easier to not comment?

Because the silence wasn't really helping. All it was doing was giving his brain plenty of time to replay every missed opportunity, every moment when he'd wanted to kiss Adalind or touch her or hold her and fear had stopped him.

When he found Adalind, he was absolutely going to make sure she knew how much she meant to him. He had no doubt Rosalee would make a point to mention how much of a mess he was without her. Actually, Monroe might even be the one to bring that up, his friend took one look at him when they stopped by the Spice Shop on the way back to the station and just sort of sighed.

What the hell did that even mean?

They spent a few minutes updating Monroe and Rosalee and learning that, although plenty of wesen had been in and out of the shop all morning, it had been to show support for Nick and not because they knew anything. All of these people who didn't even know Adalind and only knew Nick by reputation were stopping by to offer help. It was humbling to say the least.

Back at the station, Nick didn't even make it to his desk before his phone rang.

'Burkhardt.'

'Nick!' Bud cried. 'I know who the dead guy is! Can you come to me? Or should I come to you? No, I should come to you.'

Nick's heart lurched and it took him a moment to understand what Bud was actually saying. 'Bud, slow down.'

'Right. Sorry!' his friend apologised quickly. 'One of my fishing buddies, he showed the photo around and his mother's friend's sister-in-laws husband's brother recognised the dead kidnapper.'

As tired as he was, he was certain he hadn't followed Bud's words but he had caught the gist. Somehow, Bud had finally identified one of the kidnappers.

'His name is Donovan,' Bud told him in a rush. 'Quinton Donovan, he, uh, he worked for his brother until that whole wesenrein thing. His brother was one of the men you killed.'

Well that explained the paper hidden in the jacket lining but it didn't explain what he'd wanted with Adalind. 'Thanks, Bud.'

'Hey, no problem, Nick, you just find Adalind and bring her home safe.'

'I will.' He hung up and turned to Hank. 'Bud got us a name.'

Quinton Donovan had a sheet a mile long. He'd been picked up on multiple counts of assault, two counts of theft and one count of attempted murder. The picture in the file matched the guy they had in the morgue, the prints on file didn't. In fact, according to Donovan's file, he was still locked up serving the last few months of the attempted murder charge.

The more he read about Quinton Donovan the more he realised that wasn't who they had done in the morgue. It took some searching and a couple of phone calls, but in the end Nick was able to find a photo of the real Quinton Donovan. The two looked nothing alike. Their dead kidnapper was five foot seven, had a shaved head and blue eyes. He also had two tattoos and a number of scars. Quinton Donovan, the real one, had full sleeves on both arms, was six foot and had lost his sight in one of his brown eyes in a prison brawl.

Nick thumped his desk in frustration, shoved away from it when that didn't prove enough of a release and started to pace. Hank, who was still frowning over the file, didn't even look up. When the pacing didn't do it, Nick slammed a kick into the wastepaper basket sitting between his chair and Hank's. This earned him a few raised eyebrows from other cops circling around but nobody said anything.

Why was nobody saying anything?!

'Got him,' Hank announced.

Nick was at his side in a heartbeat. 'Geoffrey Hubert,' he read off Hank's screen.

'Quinton Donovan was his cellmate for six months back in '09,' Hank read off the sheet. 'Hubert's got an ex-wife and two kids. Got a current address here.'

Nick's, 'Let's check it out,' felt a little unnecessary but the words felt good, like they were finally making progress.

'We get an address?' Wu asked, popping up behind Nick suddenly, cardboard tray of to-go coffee cups in hand.

Taking the coffee Wu offered him, Nick caught Wu up on what they'd learned. Wu didn't hesitate to turn around and follow them out to the garage, listening as Nick explained the mix-up of the ID photos in the files.

'We ran Hubert's prints,' Wu pointed out. 'They don't match the guy downstairs either.'

'I googled him,' Hank admitted. 'Hubert's kids have a couple of photos of him on their social media accounts.'

'So someone switched his photo with his old cell mate and swapped out his prints?'

'Looks like it.'

Wu then pointed out what Nick didn't have room in his list of worries to think about. 'That kind of thing requires access or a really good hacker.'

'I don't have time to worry about that right now.' Nick simply kept walking.

'Yeah,' Wu acknowledged. 'But don't you wonder what else this group changed and why?'

'Unless it's going to help me find Adalind,' Nick growled, 'I don't much care.'

Wu held his hands up in a gesture of peace and let it go.

Geoffrey Hubert lived in a shitty apartment on the ground floor of an apartment building that looked like it should have been condemned decades ago. That was the outside, though. The inside of Hubert's apartment was spotless, not the kind of tidy that said someone had come through and cleaned it out but the kind that said Hubert himself was obsessively clean.

It wasn't what Nick was expecting but as they started to go through the apartment he could see how that might work to their advantage. Hubert filed everything meticulously; in his home office a file cabinet was filled with bills sorted first alphabetically and then by date.

There was no computer in the apartment, just a tablet that had run out of power. Nick plugged it in to the charger he found sitting in the bedroom and poked around the bedroom hoping to find something that would reveal why he'd been with the men who abducted Adalind.

The bedroom gave him nothing to go on, just a couple of photos of Hubert with his kids confirming the man's identity and that he was definintely the body in the morgue.

The iPad didn't have a passcode (stupidity or luck, Nick wasn't about to complain) so once it had powered back up it was easy for Nick to flick through its contents. He found what he was looking for in the photos. There were dozens of photos of Adalind and even more of them together. There were pictures of Nick going to and from work, pictures at the Spice Shop, at restaurants and even at the grocery store. The photos of Adalind showed much the same thing, in each one she was completely unaware she was being photographed and was easily going about her normal daily business.

There wasn't a single photo of them at home.

Nick made sure to go through every photo and the more he saw the better the picture they made. The photos of Adalind always began at the Spice Shop and then followed her from that point until she finished her chores and turned for home. The photos of him picked up his trail at work and then followed his movement for a couple of hours each day.

For some reason the photographer had never followed them home and Nick didn't understand why, even if he was incredibly grateful. It had taken a lot of searching to find the loft; he didn't want to think that one guy watching their every move had undone all of their hard work.

Because he hadn't been watching their every move. There was a deeper pattern to the photos Nick couldn't yet see. There had to be, abandoning the tail before finding out where they lived seemed pointless. Wouldn't they gain more from knowing where Nick and Adalind lived? Sure they had decent security â€" Nick had made damn sure of that â€" but catching them at home where they could both be targeted made more sense than staging an elaborate traffic accident to abduct Adalind.

Unless they'd been after Adalind specifically? But if that was the case why had they been watching Nick as well? Was he a target? Did he have to worry that he was next? God, what would happen to Kelly if both he and Adalind were taken? If something should happen to both of them?

And now he was stuck thinking about guardianship of his son on top of the terror he was already feeling for Adalind.

Not that there was much to think about, although maybe he and Adalind should have an actual conversation about it, but Nick had just sort of assumed that if something happened to both of them that Kelly would go to Monroe and Rosalee. After all, the blutbad and fuchsbau were the only family he and Adalind even had.

He'd broach the topic with Adalind when she was home and safe. Maybe after she'd been home for a few days, that wasn't the kind of thing he really wanted her thinking about after everything she'd been through. Not that he knew what she was going through; he didn't even know why they'd taken her.

What if she was hurt? What if they were torturing her? What if she was already dead?

No. No, he would know if she was dead. Kelly would know. They'd feel

it and right now he knew she was alive, she'd be burning with rage at being kept from her son, but she was definitely alive.

He refused to believe any different.

They took his iPad, the old fashioned Rolodex off the kitchen counter and a few other items that had struck Hank and Wu as potentially useful and moved on to speak with Hubert's ex-wife and his kids.

The ex-wife didn't seem at all upset to learn of Hubert's death. Her exact words were, 'Good. That no, good bastard deserved whatever he got.'

She'd had a lot of anger behind that statement, enough that she involuntarily woged, eliciting the comment, 'He had his neck broken by the hexenbiest he was trying to abduct,' from Nick.

Hank looked at him in surprise.

Not seeming the least bit concerned about having a Grimm on her doorstep (or two cops for that matter), Edie Holloway (she'd gone back to her maiden name 30 seconds after the divorce, she told them), rolled her eyes. 'What the hell was he doing taking on a hexenbiest?'

'We were hoping you could tell us,' Hank explained.

With a resigned sigh, she beckoned them inside and through to the little kitchen at the back of the house. She didn't offer them a place to sit but she did offer them coffee. They both declined.

'I haven't had anything to do with that lazy son-of-a-bitch since our youngest turned eighteen. The kids didn't want anything to do with him and they were finally old enough that I didn't have to deal with any court appointed bullshit.'

'You don't know who your ex was involved with? A girlfriend perhaps or any friends he might have? Anything you could give us would be helpful.'

Holloway considered Hank's words carefully. 'I don't know any woman who'd be stupid enough to sleep with him â€" I only stuck around as long as I did because I needed the help with the kids. He's got a friend, though, Thatch - Euston Thatcher â€" he's another bastard. Hope that hexenbiest kills him too.'

Nick pulled the photo of the four men emerging from the SUV out of his pocket and showed it to Holloway. He couldn't help but hope that if this Thatcher guy was one of the men in the photo that he did meet the same fate as Hubert. If only because it meant Adalind was still alive and defending herself.

'Do you recognise anyone in this photo?'

Holloway took the photo and studied it carefully. 'Well that's my bastard ex,' she pointed to the man who'd climbed out of the rear passenger seat, further confirming Hubert's identity. 'And that's Thatch,' she pointed to the man on Hubert's left, the one who'd emerged from the front passenger side of the SUV. 'I don't know the other two,' she apologised. 'Maybe if they weren't woged.'

'You got an address for Euston Thatcher?' Nick asked.

Holloway shook her head. 'I never wanted anything to do with him.'

'I don't suppose you've got a better photo of him?' Nick took a chance that even if she didn't want anything to do with her ex or his friend that she, like every other woman he'd ever known (although Adalind didn't really fit into that category â€" when had she ever?) she'd have a photo or two lying around.

She did. It took some digging but eventually she dug up a photo of Thatcher sans woge from the bottom of a box of her kids' awards from school.

'Don't know why the hell I put them in that box,' she'd muttered as she handed it over.

It didn't make much difference to Nick where the photo had come from; all he cared about was that he was finally â€" finally! â€" making progress. For the first time since he'd seen Adalind's crumpled car, Nick felt like he was getting closer to finding her.

He had a name now, and a face to go with it. He would track down Euston Thatcher and do whatever it took to get Adalind home safe.

He had a lot of things he needed her to know and he was damned if he was going to let her miss out on a life with him and Kelly. She deserved that future he'd been thinking about, deserved it more than anyone else he'd ever met.

He was going to find Adalind and bring her home and he finally felt like he had enough clues to do that.

He was going to find her. He was going to bring her home to their "fome" and he was going to tell her exactly what she meant to him. This time, he wasn't going to be vague with his picture of the future. This time he'd use specific words.

This time he wasn't afraid to admit what he was feeling.

3. Chapter 3

****a/n: ****Thanks again for all the wonderful reviews! Please enjoy this next chapter and let me know your thoughts.

****'Til It's Gone Part 3****

There was something decidedly satisfying about the sound and feel of a sledgehammer striking brick. It was the destructive nature of it, the satisfying crunch as brick crumbled away, the feeling of impact vibrating up through his arms. For that moment, as the hammer collided with the wall, he didn't have to think, he didn't have to worry. There was just a primal relief of rage and guilt, and the constant undercurrent of terror.

WHUMP!

He remembered that moment when he'd kicked in the door of Euston Thatcher's house and found the jagerbar attempting to flee through an open window.

WHUMP!

He didn't hesitate to follow him. The jagerbar made it out the window and was already halfway across the backyard before Nick reached the window. Hank had doubled back around front to try and cut him off while Nick had simply gone through the window after him.

WHUMP!

He'd chased Thatcher across three backyards and down two alleys before he'd finally caught up to him. The satisfaction of slamming the man straight into the side of a dumpster had relieved some of Nick's pent up rage.

WHUMP!

Thatcher hadn't gone quietly. Even as Nick tried to get the cuffs on him, the man twisted and kicked until he'd resorted to slamming his head back. Nick had managed to pull away fast enough to avoid having his nose broken but pulling so far out of reach gave Thatcher enough leverage to break free of his restraining hold.

WHUMP!

Nick had welcomed the fight. He'd dodged a fist and delivered a kick that Thatcher had easily moved to avoid. Instead of making Nick's anger worse, the chance to actually fight one of the men responsible for Adalind's abduction went a long way to making him feel like he might find her before it was too late.

WHUMP!

His elbow collided with Thatcher's nose and the man stumbled back, momentarily blinded and that was when Hank had finally caught up. It wasn't as satisfying but Nick had to concede that there'd be a lot less paperwork if Hank and he simply subdued Thatcher rather than Nick beating the hell out of him " like he'd have preferred.

WHUMP!

He hadn't wanted to take Thatcher back to the station. He was in full Grimm mode in that moment and, had it been Monroe with him and not Hank, they likely would have taken Thatcher to the Spice Shop instead. Fifteen minutes in the basement of the shop and they would have gotten a location out of the jagerbar. Hank had already called it in though, and before Nick could persuade his partner they needed to handle it the Grimm way, Thatcher was being bundled into the back of a patrol car.

WHUMP!

He didn't hear the elevator, or the grate sliding up, he just continued to lash out, striking the wall again and again. He didn't know how many times Monroe had to shout his name before he finally

lowered the sledgehammer and turned to face his friend.

'Uh, Nick,' Monroe began cautiously. 'What happened to your wall?'

Nick shrugged, taking the time to survey the damage he was doing. Explaining how he'd come to be tearing a hole through the wall of his living room wasn't something he thought was a necessary topic for discussion right now.

Really, the why was so much more important. 'Hank called you,' he surmised.

Monroe nodded, edging around the crumbled brick and plaster dust covering the floor and reached out to take the sledgehammer from Nick. He let his friend take the sledgehammer and turned to the kitchen and a bottle of beer. He was going to need a drink if he wasn't going to be able to tear apart the wall.

Behind him, Monroe hesitated before he placed the sledgehammer against the undamaged wall and followed Nick across the loft to the kitchen.

'You know Adalind's going to be furious when she sees what you've done to her wall,' Monroe observed calmly.

'Yeah, well, she'd have to be here for that.' Nick did nothing to conceal his bitterness. The hope he'd been clinging to those first two days was long gone and now all he had left was the cold fury.

And he wasn't even sure who he was directing that toward at the moment. He hated being stuck on the sidelines, hated that he'd taken things a little too far with Thatcher, far enough that Renard had finally pulled his head out of his ass and realised that Nick wasn't just sitting back and taking this objectively. So now he was stuck at home destroying walls while Hank and Wu worked to find Adalind.

He hadn't taken it well. In fact, Renard was now sporting a black eye and a split lip.

Actually, it was probably the whole assaulting his superior that had gotten him sent home more than attempting to strangle their suspect. Given what Thatcher had done, no one could really blame him for using a little excessive force. It wouldn't be the first time they'd had to blur the lines and step into the grey that being a Grimm forced him to see.

It wasn't an easy realisation but these days it was becoming easier and easier to turn his back on what he'd stood for as a cop those first years when he was still shiny and new and fresh out of the academy. It was easier to do what was necessary now because he knew that in order for other cops to maintain that line between right and wrong, sometimes he had to break it.

It wasn't like ordinary cops could handle the wesen criminals causing havoc in Portland. Some days, he wasn't even sure he could handle them and he had the help of a blutbad, a fuchsbau and a hexenbiest.

Not that he'd ever really made Adalind feel like she was helping. Why hadn't he made her feel more included? It was like he'd heard everything she'd said and then just ignored it. Oh, he'd made an effort to talk to her more, ask her more about the things she knew, but he was still reluctant to really involve her in his Grimm work.

At least he could blame most of that reluctance on his unwillingness to put the mother of his child in danger. It was bad enough, how frequently he put his own life on the line. He could say with complete confidence that it had nothing to do with a lack of trust. He'd gotten over that issue the night she'd revealed the suppressant had worn off.

'So Hank told me what happened,' Monroe began. 'Dude, did you really punch Renard?'

'The split lip was an accident,' Nick admitted. 'The eye was intentional.'

Monroe sighed. 'Well, that's why I'm here,' Monroe informed him, forcing Nick to abandon thoughts of how satisfying it had been when his fist had collided with Renard's face. He'd had it coming, that crack about Adalind being nothing more than a placeholder for Juliette and done more than strike a nerve.

Bringing up Renard's attempts to blackmail Adalind, proving that he knew everything that had been going on between the two on their little coffee meets probably hadn't been the wisest idea. It did diminish their ability to use the attempts for a little leverage of their own later, but it had been worth the complete look of surprise on Renard's face and the knowledge that Adalind had been playing with him. That she'd intentionally led him to believe Nick was still in the dark about her powers being back and the truth about where she'd been each time they'd met.

'Hank gave me an address,' Monroe declared. 'You might want to get cleaned up.'

Nick looked down and saw what Monroe was talking about. He was a mess of dirt and dust, all of it sticking to his sweaty arms and likely his face. How long had he been wrecking that wall? What time was it? It had to be sometime after 9 (maybe water would have been a better choice " he lowered the bottle of beer hastily before he could take another swallow) because Rosalee had turned up to check on him and Kelly shortly before 8am.

Shit, where were Rosalee and Kelly?

'Downstairs,' Monroe assured him. 'Rosalee thought she'd do a load of washing and she took Kelly with her. I think she wanted to spare him the sound of his father tearing apart his home.'

Nick winced but conceded the point. 'Hank found an address?'

Monroe confirmed he'd heard correctly with a nod. 'Thatcher didn't talk, he started crying for a lawyer, but they looked deeper into his history and found the names of a few associates. They're taking one address, we're taking the other.'

Nick narrowed his eyes. 'Does Renard know about this?'

'Nope.'

Nick was okay with that. It didn't take him long to get cleaned up and after a brief pause to say goodbye to Kelly "and promise to bring Adalind home " Nick was driving to the address Monroe showed him.

On the drive, Monroe explained what they knew about the address and the guy who apparently lived there. It wasn't much, nothing they'd gotten in the last few days had amounted to much of anything. It was a nightmare. Like being trapped in a constant nightmare where he was helpless to do anything but sit back and watch as the woman he was raising a child with was potentially tortured and then killed.

Pete Davis was another ex-con with a rap sheet full of petty crimes and time spent in and out of jail. From what Wu had been able to discover, it looked like Davis was little more than a body for hire. That actually helped, if he was in it for the money then it was much more likely Davis' loyalties could be swayed.

'He fits the basic height and weight as one of the men from the abduction footage,' Monroe added. 'Maybe we'll get lucky and he'll woge and we'll know its him for sure.'

They could only hope.

Davis did woge. In fact, he opened the door at their knock, took one look at Nick, woged, attempted to slam the door shut and made a run for it. Monroe slammed a hand against the door, halting it before it could close completely and then he shoved it open and they both gave chase. It wasn't pretty.

Davis' home was a mess, the complete opposite of what Hubert's had been. It worked to their advantage in a way because, Davis tripped over a pile of magazines and old beer bottles before he'd even made it halfway through the living room toward the side door.

Nick tackled him to the floor, shoving him face down and wrenching his arms behind his back, pressing his knee into the small of Davis' back to keep him down. When he struggled, Nick grabbed the back of his head and slammed his face into the floor. He leant down so he could speak his next words directly into Davis' ear.

'Just give me a reason to kill you,' he threatened.

'There's no one else in the house,' Monroe reported, coming back into the room. He took one look at Nick pinning Davis to the floor and nodded. 'I'll get the rope and a chair.'

Between the two of them, they made quick work of dragging Davis up and tying him to a wooden chair Monroe had found in what passed for a dining room. He lashed out at them, woging again in an attempt to appear more threatening. He was definitely one of the two klaustreich from the abduction footage. If Nick had to guess he'd say the other klaustreich was a friend or even a family member.

He wasn't above using a little torture to get what he needed.

He made sure Davis knew it.

He appreciated that Monroe never said a word. Nick had to break three of Davis' fingers before he'd talk to them and that wasn't anywhere near as far as Nick had been willing to go.

He held his phone up, showing Davis one of the pictures of Adalind he'd sent to his own phone. 'You and three other men abducted this woman three days ago,' Nick snarled. 'Where did you take her?'

Monroe helpfully applied a little pressure to one of Davis' broken fingers in case he thought he could get away with lying to them.

'A warehouse!' he panted. 'We got paid to take her and deliver her to a warehouse!'

'Address?'

'I don't know!' he whined. 'I didn't write it down! Max, Max drove!'

'Who the hell is Max?' Nick demanded.

'My cousin!' This time his response came on a whimper as Monroe continued to squeeze a second broken finger. 'Max Weston! He's the one who planned this whole thing, the one who took the job.' Davis whimpered again. 'Man, I just needed the money, nobody told me there'd be a Grimm involved! We was just supposed to take one hexenbiest bitch!'

Nick moved in, lowering his head so he was level with Davis and so the man could get a nice long look at the rage that was burning in them. 'That hexenbiest bitch,' there might have been actual ice dripping from Nick's words, 'is mine.'

And that might have been just a little on the possessive side but it got him what he wanted. With the help of a backhanded blow across the face.

Davis gave them his cousin's address, phone number and the name of the garage where he worked. They left him tied to the chair in his living room for Hank and Wu to find. Monroe sent Hank a text to let them know where they could find him but that was about as willing as Nick was to ensure someone else didn't find him first.

It wouldn't pay for Max Weston to know he and Monroe were coming for him.

Unlike Thatcher and his cousin, Weston didn't run when he spotted Nick and Monroe walking toward him up his drive. He tried to play it off like he had no idea why a Grimm would be coming to visit him, just stuck his head back under the hood of a beaten up truck. It was unfortunate for him that Nick wasn't in the mood to play and he wasn't wearing his badge right then. He only let Weston get as far through his clueless act as it took him to reach the guy.

Punching him in the face was so much more satisfying when Weston honestly didn't see it coming.

He still tried to play innocent, even after Nick's blow sent him stumbling back from the truck and made it clear he was dealing very much with a pissed off Grimm and not the friendly one Bud mostly saw.

'Hey, now!' he protested, 'You can't just go around punching people.'

Nick just looked at him with a stony stare until Weston shifted uncomfortably and the first real hint that maybe this wasn't going to go as he expected started to sink in.

'Aw hell,' he grumbled. 'I give you names and the money trail I want immunity.'

'Maybe you should hit him again,' Monroe suggested. 'He gave that up way too easy.'

Weston held up his hands and took a hasty step back. 'I don't owe those guys nothing,' he assured them. 'I'm not getting locked up just cause I did some work, man's gotta make a living.'

'You kidnapped a woman,' Monroe pointed out.

Weston shrugged. 'That was the job.'

Nick hit him again.

'Hey, hey!' he yelled. 'Watch the face! My girlfriend'll get pissy if she comes home and I'm all beat up.'

Nick felt suggesting she might not ever see his face again would be a little on the melodramatic side, even if that was the kind of mood he was in. 'I want names, addresses, everything you can give me and I'll make sure you get jail time.'

'Hey, I said immunity!'

'You go to jail or I kill you,' Nick stated flatly. 'I guarantee no one will ever find your body.'

Nick was really glad Monroe was with him and not Hank. Monroe didn't flinch at his words or his tone, had in fact helped Nick bury a lot of bodies in the years since they'd become friends. He understood things couldn't always stick to the line of the law. Hank was beginning to see that too but it was one thing to kill a bunch of wesen in the middle of the woods at night when lives were on the line, it was another thing entirely to kill a guy in his driveway when he wasn't trying to kill them first.

Actually, Nick was a little worried he didn't find the idea troubling. But, well, it was Adalind so he'd just deal with his extreme lack of a conscience when she was home safe.

'Yeah,' Weston said slowly, 'Neither of those are really going to work for me.'

Then he made a run for it.

Forty-five minutes later, in complete violation of Renard's orders,

Nick was back at work, shoving a slightly bloody, definitely muddy, Weston into a chair in an interrogation room. He'd decided against killing the man but only because he really didn't think he'd be able to get the answers he needed out of the man's corpse.

He wondered if there were wesen out there with such an ability.

Maybe he'd ask Adalind about that when she was home.

He left Weston stewing and went out to wait at his desk for Hank and Wu to return. He could feel Renard's eyes burning into the back of his head and almost wished the man would come out to confront him. He was defying a direct order after punching a superior, Renard had every right to come out and tell him to leave. Nick knew he wouldn't. Curiosity to see what Nick would do next, to understand the full extent of his feelings for Adalind â€" likely to find a way to use them â€" would prevent Renard from even trying.

So while Renard's gaze burned a hole in his head and he waited for Hank and Wu, Nick caught himself up on what his partner and sergeant had been doing all morning. He could tell without having to speak with them the address they'd gone to check out was a bust. Nick had identified all four men from the SUV now and had two in custody, one in the morgue and the fourth one tied to a chair and waiting to be collected by the police.

He assumed it wouldn't take Hank long.

It didn't. Soon enough, Hank and Wu were walking into the department, Davis cuffed and bloody with his fingers strapped, between them. All three of them gave him a look that clearly blamed him for what had just happened before Wu escorted Davis into an interview room.

'Did you get what you needed?' Hank asked quietly, not quite judging Nick's actions but not approving of them either.

Nick still very much didn't care. 'I did. Davis' cousin is waiting to talk to us.'

'Then let's go see what he has to say.'

The first thing Weston said was, 'You're here to make sure he doesn't kill me, right?' He looked hopefully at Hank. 'Because I'm not talking if he's just going to kill me.'

Nick rolled his eyes while Hank's eyebrows shot up. Weston was nothing like what you'd expect from a man accused of abducting a woman and masterminding the accident and snatch involved. He might have been six foot, hairy, with a mean look about him but he talked faster and more nervously than Adalind did when she got worked up about something.

'Yeah,' Hank assured Weston with a smidge of sarcasm. 'That's why I'm here.'

Nick didn't feel the need to play nice. 'Start talking,' he ordered.

'There's this guy I know,' Weston began hurriedly, 'I do some work

for him now and then, cause the money's real good. He said he had a job, needed four men to take a woman, only he needed it to look big and splashy, needed it to get noticed.' Weston shrugged. 'That part was kind of easy. Didn't take much to snatch that guy and make him drive the van, then all we had to do was take the woman. We got extra money if we could snatch her kid, too, but he wasn't in the car.'

Hank frowned but Nick wasn't surprised, that just supported his assumptions about what Adalind had been most focused on. It also kind of pissed him off, but as he was already pretty freaking mad, he let that one go in favour of getting every last piece of information out of Weston.

'We got paid half before, half after we delivered the woman.'

'Where did you deliver her?'

Weston shrugged, 'Just this warehouse we sometimes use for meets.' When Nick glared at him, he hastily added, 'I'll write down the address.'

He did as he said he would, he wrote down the address of the warehouse and gave them every last scrap of information they could work out of him. He didn't have anyone to protect now that one of his crew was dead and the rest were in custody. He already had the money and giving up the guy who'd contacted him for the job was a better option than death by Grimm.

Nick was satisfied enough with what he'd gotten that he didn't even punch Weston when he made an offhand comment about how easily they'd been able to move Adalind's gloriously curved body into the back of the SUV.

'Man, you'd never know she'd just had a kid.'

Hank's restraining hand on his arm was about the only thing that stopped him from launching himself cross the interview table at the added comment.

'It isn't worth it,' Hank reminded him. 'Let's check out this warehouse before Renard decides to send you packing.'

Nick snorted humourlessly. 'He won't send me home until he knows just how he can use my relationship with Adalind to control her or me. Or, hell, even both of us.'

'You think he'd actually do that?'

Nick didn't think Hank's question deserved a response. Hadn't they learned a long time ago that Renard liked having a Grimm "under his control" when he was trying to gain ground with the Royals? Now that he was trying to win the mayoral election for Black Claw the man had even more of a reason to want a way to control Nick.

The longer they could let him go on believing he could control them, the better chance they had at finding out what he was up to. Eventually, Eve and all her creepy stalking would have to turn up something. Though how no one noticed the tall dark skinned woman slinking about and breaking into places, he'd never know.

As long as it kept working and she kept finding the information they needed to stay one step ahead (okay, it was more like two steps behind) of Black Claw that was enough for him. It had to be. He clearly had other things to be worrying about.

There was nothing to be found at the warehouse. It was just a meeting point. Whatever cameras had once been operational had been smashed to pieces and never replaced. They bagged a few cigarette butts and took a few photos of tyre tread marks burned onto the concrete floor from someone leaving in a hurry but Nick wasn't expecting to learn much of anything from those.

No, now the best way they had of finding Adalind was a squirrely little man who set up meetings and "facilitated the exchange of services" for a select element of the wesen criminal community. Of course, they had to find him first.

'Oh sure, everybody knows about Stitch,' Monroe said, when he stopped by the Spice Shop to pick up Kelly. 'Not a great guy but he can talk to anyone. Everybody tolerates him because nobody likes him. He gets the job done.'

'Why do you know that?' Nick asked, his mind wasn't really on the question, though, this would mark the third night he and Kelly would be spending without Adalind.

'I know a guy who knows a guy.'

'Yeah,' Nick said ruefully. 'I'm beginning to feel like that's the only way the wesen community works.'

'It's not all like that,' Rosalee defended. 'You're just looking at the bad side of it now because they're the ones who can lead you to Adalind.'

Nick acknowledged the point with a tilt of his head and picked up Kelly in his carrier, swinging the diaper bag over his shoulder. 'Thanks for watching him.'

'Oh, you know I'd never say no to spending time with Kelly.'

'Yeah,' Nick nodded, 'but this is a little more than just spending time with him.'

'It's only temporary,' Rosalee reminded him firmly. 'Adalind will be back soon.'

He wished she hadn't made it sound like Adalind was simply away on vacation. She wasn't and he sincerely doubted wherever she was being held could ever be compared to anything other than the vacation from hell. He appreciated her faith, though, that even after three days she still believed they'd find Adalind.

Meisner called him on the drive home.

'We need to meet,' he said in his usual blunt tone.

'I can't,' Nick said and there was a good deal of anger in his tone because Adalind had been missing for three days and no one at HW had

been returning his calls.

'It's about Adalind.'

'I'll be right there.'

The only problem with being "right there" was that he also had Kelly with him. He debated turning back around and leaving Kelly with Monroe and Rosalee but he'd already asked so much of them. It wasn't like he could leave Kelly in the car, either, but if Meisner knew something, if he knew anything that could get him even one step closer to finding Adalind then he had to meet him.

He'd just do it with Kelly.

Eve met him at the door. He hadn't known Henrietta very well, just well enough to know she'd been scary enough before she'd been "killed" and reprogrammed, but he sometimes got the impression that whatever they'd done to erase all of her personality and turn her into a hexenbiest killing machine, hadn't stuck as well as they believed.

The way she looked down at Kelly and almost smiled, was one of those times. 'He and Diana will need a safe home.'

Nick got the feeling she was trying to tell him something with her words but he had no idea what it was supposed to be. He never had any idea what she was talking about when she spouted off her seemingly random statements. He wondered if he was the only one she talked to like that because whenever he broached the topic with Trubel " whenever he actually saw the younger Grimm " she had no idea what he was talking about.

Eve led him through the tunnels to Meisner who was busy studying a number of different screens that seemed to be showing images from the docks and an airport Nick didn't think was anywhere in the US.

Nick didn't know why he'd been expecting Meisner to immediately launch into some useful piece of information that would help locate Adalind. It wasn't like he'd ever shown a particular interest in Nick's problems before. It was just that he had shown an interest in Adalind.

'Black Claw has been very active over the last few days,' Meisner informed him. 'There's been movement in several key locations where goods are being trafficked into Portland.'

'What does this have to do with Adalind?' Nick demanded.

'Nothing,' Meisner informed him. 'That's the point. This has nothing to do with Adalind. Black Claw is getting ready to make some sort of move and they're making sure you're distracted.'

Nick took a moment to let that sink in and when he still hadn't done anything more than stare blankly at Meisner after a full minute the man seemed to realise he might have put a foot wrong somewhere.

'This is what they are trying to distract you from,' Meisner explained quietly, like the volume of the words being repeated would

somehow make them easier to take in. 'Black Claw is attempting to bring something into the country and they want you distracted while they do it. That is why they orchestrated Adalind's abduction.'

What Nick was hearing was a lot about Adalind being gone but nothing about bringing her back. What did he care if Black Claw had taken her to keep him occupied? They'd still taken her. He really didn't give a fuck what they were trying to stop him from seeing; he only cared about finding Adalind and getting her home safe.

As far as he was concerned, in that moment, Black Claw could do whatever the hell they liked as long as they gave him Adalind back.

And, yes, he knew damn well that when Adalind was home safe he'd be seriously pissed off that he let Black Claw make such a huge move while he was distracted but right now he didn't much care. Black Claw was HW's problem; Adalind was what mattered to him. Finding Adalind meant a lot more to him than whatever bigger picture Meisner was trying to get him to see.

'I don't care about Black Claw,' he snarled. 'They're your problem, isn't that what this whole organisation is for? Adalind is what I care about.' He raised the arm that was still holding Kelly in his carrier to drive home his point. 'She's all we care about right now. If you can't help me find her then I'm going home.'

Meisner looked at him for a long time, long enough that Nick decided HW was going to be no help to him. He'd just turned to leave; disgusted with the man who he had thought once cared for Adalind when Meisner spoke.

'She chose well,' he murmured. 'Giving you her heart.'

With a snarl, Nick stomped out of HW. He would find Adalind and then he would deal with HW and Black Claw. But only once he'd found Adalind and knew she was safe.

He didn't realise Eve had followed him out until she spoke right in his ear. That alone was enough to set his skin crawling, her words barely made an impact.

'When you're ready to make your family whole come find me.' She spoke in that emotionless way she had but once again Nick got the feeling her eyes were saying a lot more than her mouth.

'Are you telling me you know where Adalind is being held?' Nick demanded.

'I wasn't talking about Adalind.'

And because she still clearly understood the powerful nature of a good (dramatic) exit, Eve turned and walked away leaving him completely flabbergasted.

'What the hell does that mean?' he shouted after her but she never turned back to look at him and no words were called back.

****a/n: ****SO many wonderful reviews! Thanks guys! I finished the final part yesterday and it did not end how i was expecting it to (when do these things ever) but i think its how it needed to end. Anyway, i'll post part 5 in a couple of days, so for now, enjoy part 4!

****'Til It's Gone - Part 4****

Nick went into work the next morning as though nothing had ever changed and much like he had the day before when Nick had returned (gleefully ignoring direct orders), Renard ignored him. That didn't mean he wasn't closely watching everything Nick did, it just meant that, again like the day before, he was choosing to view the whole thing as another way to gain leverage on a Grimm and not reprimand one of his men.

Whatever Renard was doing, it gave Nick the chance to do something about finding Adalind and that was all he cared about.

He'd barely had a chance to sit down and greet Hank before Trubel walked in. He'd been under the impression she was away working for HW in another country but instead she walked right up to his desk and forced a short skinny man down into the visitor's chair they rarely used.

She'd used a set of plastic zip ties to secure his hands behind his back and he was sporting a nice big bruise on his left cheek. He didn't look happy to be there but Nick had to give Trubel points for looking like she had every right to be hauling the guy around in restraints.

'I'm supposed to deliver this guy to you,' she informed Nick. He was glad to note she seemed just as confused by the orders as he was. 'Meisner said you'd be looking for him.'

That confused Nick even more. After the way he'd stormed out of HW he hadn't expected any contact from Meisner at all. Definitely not the delivery of a living, breathing, man.

'Who is he?' Hank asked, leaning around his desk to get a good look at the man.

'He goes by Stitch,' she replied, giving the guy a warning look when he started to move. He slunk deeper into the chair and Nick's heart leapt.

'Stitch?' he repeated but he didn't actually wait for her to answer. He turned on the slimy looking man and the look he gave the man was all Grimm. 'You're going to tell me everything you know about Adalind Schade's abduction,' Nick informed him coolly. 'Then maybe I wont kill you.'

For some reason, the criminal wesen he came across always took his threat seriously, even in the middle of a police station where he'd have a hell of a time trying to hide the body.

Trubel seemed surprised by his words. 'What? What happened to Adalind?'

'Meisner didn't tell you?' This didn't actually surprise Nick, it

seemed like the ex-resistance member was whole-heartedly stepping into Chavez's shoes. 'She was abducted four days ago.'

'What?'

But Nick didn't have time to give Trubel the whole story, he was closer than he'd gotten to Adalind since she'd been abducted and he wasn't about to waste time rehashing the whole nightmarish experience.

'Where is Adalind?' Nick emphasised every word, stressing the need for Stitch to answer honestly lest he lose his head.

'I just provide a service,' Stitch replied, speaking for the first time since Trubel had shoved him into the chair. His voice didn't match his tiny frame, it was deep and throaty, he probably came across as very commanding over the phone. Huddled in the small metal visitor's chair he lost some of that commanding power.

'I know what you do,' Nick snapped. 'Tell me who hired you to organise Adalind's abduction.'

Stitch shook his head. 'I can't rat out my client, I have a reputation to maintain.'

'Your reputation won't mean anything without your head,' Trubel pointed out helpfully.

Stitch shrank further away from her, as far as the chair would allow and looked pleadingly across at Hank. 'She just threatened to kill me! Aren't you going to do something about that?'

'That all depends on whether or not you give us a name,' Hank reasoned.

As threatened as he felt with two Grimms and a detective pressuring him, Stitch refused to give up the name of his client. Even when they moved into an interview room, away from prying eyes and got a little physical (if anyone asked he tripped over his own feet and collided with the wall. There was no helpful push.) Stitch (real name Norman Smith – easy to see why he used a street name) wouldn't budge.

Nick was seriously considering just taking him somewhere and cutting his head off when Wu popped in with Stitch's financials. The threat of beheading by Grimm didn't move Stitch but waving a future visit from the IRS in his face did the trick. Nick was sort of offended but if it got him Adalind's location he'd get over it.

They locked Stitch up in a cell until they could verify his information (and obtain enough evidence to charge him with – well whatever they could pin on him would do) and started a run on one Horatio Fitzgerald.

'Oh, hey,' Trubel said when the first picture loaded, 'I know that guy. He's one of the men Meisner thinks is running the docks for Black Claw.'

'Do you have an address?' Nick asked, a little eagerly he'd freely admit.

Trubel shook her head. 'We only had a list of aliases, I'm not even sure that's his real name.'

'Well we've got an address on file,' Hank announced. 'Forty minutes outside of Portland.'

They all leaned in as he brought the address up on Google Maps. Whoever he really was, Fitzgerald clearly had money to burn. While the house itself didn't appear to be anything special it sat on a decent sized chunk of land. Most people looking at that kind of space would probably have been thinking about its potential and the kinds of things they could do with it. Looking at all that space with nothing for miles all Nick could think about was how easy it would be for someone to go missing out there.

There'd be no one around for miles to hear Adalind scream.

It would make an excellent space for Black Claw to meet. It was out of the way, there was plenty of open land and the house itself was so far off the main road that anyone who happened to be driving by would never even know there was a house way out there.

He had a lot of trouble believing Meisner hadn't known about it. He had no doubt Trubel was going into this blind, she'd been genuinely surprised to learn Adalind was missing, but Meisner had made a career out of lying and manipulating people. He'd survived by slipping under the Royals noses and "if what Adalind suspected was true" killing off its members steadily over the years. Whether that had been solely under Renard's orders or the Resistance by way of Renard, they didn't know.

It didn't matter. Nick felt sure Meisner wouldn't have missed a great big chunk of land being used by Black Claw. If he'd been watching those shipments coming in through the airports and the docks then it stood to reason he'd know where those supplies (whatever they were) were going. Surely some of those supplies had made their way to this enormous chunk of land run by someone who was apparently quite high up in Black Claw's organisation?

'What do you know about this guy?' Nick asked Trubel while Hank and Wu tried to find a more detailed map of the area and (if they were lucky) a floor plan of the house.

Trubel shrugged. 'Not much, really, he's been spotted meeting with Lucien Petrovitch here in the States and he's rumoured to have been instrumental in the attack on the Wesen Council.'

It was alarming to realise he still had enough room left to worry about how easily Trubel talked about such things. She'd come a long way from the scared runaway he'd first met and given where her loyalties now lay he wasn't sure that was a good thing. He honestly missed the old Trubel, the one he didn't have to worry was getting in over her head. He missed the Trubel who didn't crash her bike outside his home and have to be rushed to hospital.

But that was a worry for another day, one that didn't include Adalind being held against her will and the potential for Black Claw to be making some big strike while he was distracted.

Which he still didn't actually care about, apparently he'd used up all his guilt, all his worry and fear on Adalind and his inability to face his own feelings. So while having Adalind torn away from him had forced him to face a few things, one of those things was not whatever the hell Black Claw was up to.

Didn't he have enough to deal with already? He honestly missed the days when he only had to worry about the Verat trying to kill him so the Royals could get their hands on his Keys. He actually had fond memories of those first few months when he was still trying to find his feet because, even as confused as he was, things were still so simple back then.

It was good to know that even though he'd give anything to go back to when things were so easy, he still wanted Adalind to be part of his life.

That had to prove he was finally coming to grips with his own feelings, right?

'Do we have any proof this is where Adalind's being kept?' Hank looked up from the plan he was studying.

Nick shrugged. 'Does it matter? We have to check it out, it's the only lead we've got.'

Hank nodded. 'How are we going to do this?'

Nick considered their options. Ideally they'd wait until dark and slip onto the property while there was little to no visibility. The cover of darkness would be best to help them check out the house and surrounding area without being seen, it would give them the best chance to ascertain whether or not Adalind was even there and if so where exactly on the property she was being held.

But did he want to wait that long? Could they afford wait that long?

He wanted to say no, he wanted to use the badge to get close and then let the Grimm take over once he'd gotten a closer look. He wanted to be rash, he wanted Adalind home but he also wanted her safe. He needed her to be safe. He didn't want Rosalee to have to explain to Kelly how he'd died being stupid and rushing into things just because he couldn't stand the thought of another night without Adalind.

Kelly deserved both his parents and Adalind deserved better than a half formed rescue attempt.

'We need to find everything we can on this Fitzgerald and the property. We talk to Stitch again and find out if he's ever been there, find out if Fitzgerald has any other properties he knows about. Then we go tonight, we're going to need Monroe for this one.'

'I'm coming.'

Nick hadn't actually thought Trubel would even think about sitting this one out but he just nodded to acknowledge her willingness to help. 'Can you go back to HW and find out everything you can on this

Fitzgerald?'

'I can,' but there was something in her tone that suggested she wasn't sure her returning to HW was a good idea. 'If I go in though, I'm not sure Meisner will let me back out.'

Nick wasn't the only one whose eyebrows shot up in surprise at that statement. It definitely didn't help those feelings of worry that had started churning in his gut.

He'd just add that to the list of things to worry about once Adalind was home safe. Until then his mind was pretty much a constant refrain of adalindadalindadalindadalindadalind.

Actually, if he was perfectly honest, and he'd been pretty fucking honest with himself over the last few days, his mind was pretty much always stuck on Adalind now. It was just that normally the accompanying emotion wasn't an all-encompassing terror that eclipsed all of the other things he thought about on a daily basis. You know, like work and breathing.

'I'll be there,' Trubel said firmly and that was as much as she was willing to say.

It was one thing to lay out the basics of a plan but it was another thing entirely to fill in the details and the agonising hours between designing the plan and the time they could put the plan into action.

Which was way too many freaking hours filled with rehashing every question and interview with the three surviving kidnappers and Stitch. It involved avoiding Renard and hoping like hell the Captain didn't realise something was happening. It was the constant worry that he was asking his friends to put their jobs (and their lives) on the line for someone he wasn't even sure they liked.

Both Hank and Wu had nearly died by Adalind's hand after all; it wasn't like he could hold it against them if they decided she wasn't worth it.

That didn't mean he wouldn't be hurt if they did. It was a little conflicting to realise that as his friends and his partners he wanted them to want to help, he wanted them to put themselves at risk not because of him but because they appreciated Adalind and the woman she'd become.

But necessity said he'd be happy with them going after Adalind because of what she meant to him.

The day dragged on. And on. To distract himself, Nick finished off every bit of paperwork he'd been putting off for weeks. He did as much of the paperwork on Adalind's case as he could, finishing up the paperwork on the death of her kidnapper so she would have to spend as little time as possible in the station giving statements and signing documents. It wasn't like anyone was going to hold the death of her kidnapper against her, not when there was clear footage of her being dragged out of her car while her baby was stuck in the back.

He filled out the insurance forms for Juliette's old car because Adalind was going to need a new one as soon as possible. They

wouldn't get much from the insurance company but it would be enough that Nick thought they could get something a little nicer, something that had a few more safety features. It wasn't like Juliette had purchased her car with plans of having a family in mind.

Nick successfully distracted himself with the realisation that while Adalind may have hated Juliette's car she'd driven it because it was there and it hadn't cost them anything. Even after her shopping trip with Rosalee she was still hesitant to spend his money. It was just, he didn't see it as his money anymore, he saw it as their money. Yeah, she wasn't actively contributing to the account and they were surviving off his single income but they were a family.

Besides, they'd both agreed it was still a little early for her to go back to work. Not because she wasn't physically able " and honestly she was probably getting bored at home " but because he wasn't sure she was emotionally ready to let Kelly out of her sight for the hours she'd be at work. When the thought of her going back to work did cross his mind there was genuine worry that what had happened with Diana would colour her ability to leave Kelly in day care and in the care of strangers.

Filling out the insurance forms and thinking about Adalind sent his mind wandering and he find himself wondering what had happened to her mother's house and all of the furniture and belongings. He knew Adalind had put a lot of her own things in storage, he thought she'd mentioned at one point that the only things she'd really bothered to keep when she'd moved to Austria were the powerful wesen items.

Hadn't Monroe said something about the books and objects they'd found when they'd been trying to reverse what had been done to him? Actually, he thought he recalled Renard mentioning something about the hat being quite powerful.

What had happened to the hat and the book? Did Renard still have those? He wondered if they could get them back if he did. They belonged to Adalind, belonged in her family, one day Kelly might make use of it or even Diana.

Happy for something unrelated to work to distract him, he started looking through the insurance notes and records of inheritance attached to Catherine Schade's death.

His eyebrows practically hit his hairline when he saw the house and all of the furniture had been auctioned off (though on whose authority he couldn't have said) and the money from the sale had been placed in a trust account. The account may have been in Adalind's name but he was damn sure she knew nothing about it. A little poking around showed that whoever had set up the account had only used it twice, withdrawing \$5000 each time via wire transfer to an offshore account held by the very company Adalind had gone to work for. So the Royals had somehow managed to sell off her mother's home and then, what, failed to tell her?

Yeah, he'd be fixing that up as soon as possible. Having some money of her own might make Adalind more comfortable buying things. And hey, given what he'd done to their wall in a fit of rage she was going to need a willingness to spend a little money.

And it turned out that slogging through insurance forms and trying to find your girlfriend's missing inheritance really killed the time.

Nick's fingers froze in the process of lodging one last insurance form. Yes, he'd actually just thought the word girlfriend. Girlfriend. Somehow, that just didn't seem enough to describe what he had with Adalind. It sounded innocent and almost naïve, like something teenagers or people in their early twenties would have. He and Adalind had been through far too much, had done far too much to each other, for such a simple label.

Partner was the word he used to describe Hank and as willing as Nick was to acknowledge his feelings now the word wife just layered on the terror.

And not because he didn't want it. No, it was terrifying because he realised that, actually, he could see it in that future he kept imagining he and Adalind having. That was what terrified him. How was it that in just a few short months he'd come to care about someone he'd once hated with such passion that he was quietly losing his mind while she was in the hands (they were assuming) of Black Claw? How had just a few short months changed his opinion so much that he could think about marrying Adalind without feeling guilty for betraying what he'd once had with Juliette?

Of course, that could be the sleep deprivation and terror talking, but he suspected it was truly a case of finally having found someone who accepted him for all he was and who he could accept in return.

But that all hinged on his ability to find her.

When he'd run out of paperwork to file, insurance forms and any other meaningless tasks (like refilling his stapler which he normally refused to do until Hank was forced to do it because they'd both run out of staples – it was the simple pleasures in life) he gave up on the pretence of work and went to the Spice Shop. They were all planning to meet back up there later and this way he'd get a few hours in with his son while they finalised their plans.

He was getting in that quality father/son time when Hank and Wu arrived. Wu was out of uniform in deference to the likely not-quite-legal events that were about to take place. Nick gave Kelly one more playful raspberry before he tucked him tight against his side (he loved the way Kelly automatically snuggled his face into the crook of his neck) and turned to business.

He wondered if this would be Kelly's future. Would he be a grimm like his father? Constantly faced with wesen thinking he would behead them for simply existing or would he take after Adalind? And would that even make a difference in the end? The woman Adalind was now and the family they'd created together wasn't likely to ever be normal, they'd always be involved in the wesen community and he hoped that whichever way his son turned out he'd still be willing to see that not all wesen were bad.

Being a zieberbiest didn't have to mean being a power hungry bastard, that was just how Renard operated. Adalind (as she was now) was a much better example of what you could do with that power.

But again, he was thinking of a future where Adalind was very much present and that wouldn't be the case if they didn't find her and soon.

He hated that they were leaving Rosalee behind; she'd proven time and time again, she could handle herself in these kinds of situations, but unless he wanted to leave Kelly with Bud (he'd considered it) she was the best person to stay home with him. Nick could tell Rosalee hated it just as much. Aside from Nick, she was the only one who'd taken the time and put in the effort to build a relationship with Adalind and one that had nothing to do with him. Rosalee honestly wanted to be there for Adalind and not just because she was Kelly's mother.

Trubel did manage to slip back out of HW and she'd done it in a car they could actually use. He and Monroe piled into the grey SUV she'd probably taken without anyone at HW authorising it (Nick taking the wheel and Monroe conceding the front passenger seat to Trubel) while Hank and Wu took Hank's car. It would probably pay to have at least one official vehicle for when they had to start the clean up.

Assuming there was something to legally clean up. Things could go several different ways; they could end up killing everyone in their attempt to get to Adalind or they could end up doing nothing more than walking away if she wasn't there. There was a third option where no one got killed and plenty of people got arrested but Nick assumed anyone who didn't die (if Adalind was indeed on the property) would fall into HW's hands for interrogation.

Nick didn't much care what HW did with them as long as he got Adalind out safe and it kept Meisner off his back.

They didn't talk on the drive out to the property, they'd said all they needed to in the Spice Shop and frankly Nick wasn't in the mood. He cut the lights half a mile from the turn off and then pulled into a knot of trees just a short distance beyond the main road. They'd go the rest of the way on foot.

It reminded him of the night they'd gone to rescue Diana from the King. He just hoped this time turned out differently. He'd really rather not be forced to watch Adalind being whisked away in a helicopter, especially given how well that had turned out for the King.

And he still hadn't gotten more out of Meisner about Diana's location. It would have been nice to have some good news to give Adalind when they rescued her.

He didn't want to think about the possibility that Meisner wouldn't help him given how pointedly Nick had refused to help with Black Claw.

Now wasn't the time to be worrying over that. He stepped out of the SUV, carefully closing the door, and made sure he had plenty of weapons within reach. He had his gun in its holster on his hip but he also had his crossbow and a number of the knives they'd rescued from the remains of the trailer. Monroe had taken a few from the stash his uncle had inadvertently gifted them and Trubel had more weapons on

her than Nick could account for, some of them so high tech he doubted he'd know how to use them.

He was just glad she was once again wearing armour. He still felt responsible for her, even if she didn't need him anymore.

'We taking the road?' Wu asked in a hushed voice.

Nick shook his head. 'Stick to the woods along the road. I want to get as close as possible without being seen.'

He wasn't sure what he'd been expecting to find when they finally came across someone but it wasn't the scrawny teenager too busy playing a game on his phone to notice when Nick came up behind him and knocked him out. They were still a fair distance from the house and judging by what he'd seen on the maps this kid was likely supposed to be on the lookout for any cars attempting to come up the winding access road. He had a radio on him and Nick guessed his job was nothing more than to radio the house and warn them.

He wasn't armed and he didn't seem to think his job was worth taking seriously. Nick didn't know if that boded well for the security up at the house. They obviously had some security but would they have set up a lookout so useless if they were keeping someone important locked up on the property?

Did they consider Adalind important?

They tied the kid up, gagged him and moved on.

He felt a little better when they finally reached the fence surrounding the house and found two men standing on either side of the gate. These two were armed and were intently watching the coming road despite the silence of their radios. It crossed his mind as he and Monroe split up to take them down that if the teenager missed a radio check in they might be screwed.

Monroe rushed out of the tree line and growled at the two men, distracting them long enough for Nick to catch one of them off guard. He didn't go down easily, had clearly had some training, but he never got a shot off. The man Monroe tackled however, managed to free himself from Monroe long enough to fire his gun. The shot missed Monroe by a mile, passing harmlessly by him into the trees, but the sound had Nick's ears ringing with the sudden break in the silence.

Monroe leapt in for another attack and Wu clocked the guard in the temple with the butt of his shotgun once Monroe had him pinned. Another two guards bound and gagged to collect later but they'd lost the element of surprise.

The radio in Trubel's belt came to life with demands for security teams to check in. Without knowing the right response, they couldn't just fake a check-in. After exchanging resigned looks, Trubel turned the volume on the radio down and picked up one of the guards' dropped weapons.

'We better make this quick,' Hank warned.

Nick nodded. 'We're gonna have to split up,' he acknowledge.

'There'll be more guards in the grounds around the house.'

'Wu and I can deal with them,' Trubel offered. 'You three go find Adalind.'

Nick hesitated but couldn't think of a better option that wasn't just sticking together and hoping for the best. 'Be careful.'

Trubel nodded sharply and then she and Wu slipped off along the fence line into the darkness. It didn't take them long to climb the gate but they were intercepted long before they reached the house. It wasn't long after that when the night was filled with the sounds of gunfire and the clashing of claws and teeth.

The men Fitzgerald had guarding the house were all hundjagers and they were happy to use guns or claws, it didn't bother them which. The three that attacked them in the driveway didn't go down any easier than the guards on the gate. There was no knocking these men out and tying them up. Hank killed one with a knife to the chest after a particularly painful blow to his wrist sent his gun tumbling from his hands.

Monroe ripped the throat out of the second after a very dirty tussle on the ground. Blood dripped from his mouth and he spat to clear the taste from his tongue. Nick simply shot the guard who came for him in the chest with his crossbow. When all it did was slow him down he pulled his gun and fired two more shots into the man's chest.

Somewhere off in the distance he heard Wu's shotgun blasting through the night.

Even if Adalind wasn't here something was, something they'd gone to a lot of trouble to hide. With that in mind, they closed the remaining distance to the house. No more guards came running toward them but once they'd gotten close enough to the house it was clear why.

They weren't the only ones attacking the house tonight. Someone else was already in there and judging by the sounds of breaking glass and the smash of furniture, the remaining guards were well and truly distracted. Had Trubel and Wu already reached the house? Going in there with no idea what to expect wasn't a particularly sound strategy but if Adalind was in there nothing was going to stop him.

More lights came on in the house and someone screamed. It wasn't a pleasant sound, it sounded like one of the men in the house was experiencing a lot of lasting pain. More shots sounded from the back of the house and Nick knew then that someone else had picked tonight to pay Fitzgerald a visit.

Just because they'd clearly come to kill Fitzgerald didn't mean they wouldn't turn on Nick and his friends once they realised there was another group attacking.

There was no way to get inside the house without crossing the well lit front garden. Whoever was still alive inside the house had turned on all the floodlights and the whole area was lit up like the 4th of July. Anyone watching from any of the windows on the lower or first floors would see them coming.

It was a risk he was willing to take.

Before they reached the door, a group of six men spilled out of the shadows between the house and the garage. Nick wasn't sure why they weren't already in the house but he didn't have much time to ponder it. They were too close together to safely take a shot; he didn't want to accidentally shoot Monroe or Hank in the melee. He safely holstered his gun, tossed the crossbow aside and pulled a knife as he rushed to meet the charging group head on.

Nick lost track of Hank and Monroe as he ducked and weaved, slashing out with his knife when he could. Something hard crashed into him and he felt claws rake his side, skittering off his vest and cutting deep into his arm. Pain flared up it from the wound but he ignored it. He could still move his hand and arm and that mattered more than a little (a lot) of bleeding.

'We got this!' Monroe shouted at him once they'd managed to even the numbers a little bit. 'Go find Adalind!'

Nick ducked under an arm that looked like it had been aiming to rip out his throat and made a run for the front door of the house, scooping up his crossbow as he went and trusting that Hank and Monroe could look after themselves. The door opened before he could reach it and he skidded to a stop, crossbow shooting up as he prepared to line up a shot.

He froze and for a moment the chaos around him faded away and all he could see was Adalind. She looked exhausted. She was bruised and bloody, her clothes were ripped and dirty but she was so real and standing in front of him that his heart felt like it might leap out of his chest. Even exhausted as she was and covered in blood " a lot of which didn't even look to be hers " she was still beautiful.

He had so many things he wanted to say to her, so many things he wanted her to know but right then the world around him roared back into focus and the only thing he could think to say to her was, 'Down!'

5. Chapter 5

****a/n: ****Well here it is, the final part! I'm a little excited to get this one up because its got a much more optimistic and generally positive feeling. Which is so much nicer to write after such dark broody chapters. Thank you to all my wonderful guest reviewers who i can't thank or respond to in person, you've said some really nice things about this story. I have no idea when the next one-shot will make an appearance as i haven't written it but these two fuel my mind something fierce so i'm sure it won't take too long.

****'Til it's Gone - Part 5****

He couldn't stop touching her. Whether it was a soft hand pressed to the small of her back or a tight grip on her hand, some part of him had to be touching her. It was a small mercy she seemed to need to touch him just as much. The reassurance that she was alive and safe was something he wasn't sure how to let go of.

From that moment when she'd dropped to the ground and he'd put an arrow through the man sneaking up behind her he hadn't been more than a few steps away from her. She'd been right by his side, hand clutching his jacket tightly as he and Hank cleared the building. She been right there in his arms when Trubel called the final all clear and they could finally stop fighting and for just a moment be.

Nick wasn't sure he'd ever held her so tight. He was sure he was never letting her go. The way she breathed his name into his chest, arms gripping the front of his jacket so tightly, it was as though she were afraid he would just disappear. He'd wrapped his arms around her and held her close enough it was a wonder she could still breathe.

For long moments that was all they did. Around them the house and grounds were filled with dead or unconscious wesen, both of them were soaked in blood that wasn't theirs and bleeding from wounds that were, but there was nothing he wanted to or needed to do more in those moments than hold her.

'Are you okay?' he whispered into her hair.

'You came for me.'

Nick didn't like the genuine surprise in her words but he supposed he couldn't really blame her. 'Yes,' he said simply. It wasn't a declaration, maybe it should have been, but right in that moment it was enough.

But they couldn't stand there holding each other forever, as much as they'd both like to, and eventually Nick had to pull away. He took his first proper look at her in the well-lit yard, scrutinising every bump and bruise to reassure himself that she was okay. She was doing the same to him, she'd been locked up and held against her will for days and she was making sure he was okay.

'Kelly?' she asked.

'Safe,' Nick assured her. 'He's with Rosalee.'

She nodded, reaching for him again and he took her hand. For the moment it was just the two of them. Trubel and Wu had gone back for the cars, Hank was busy calling it in and Monroe was on the phone to Rosalee assuring his wife they were all okay and they'd found Adalind.

'I was so scared,' Adalind told him. 'When they took me, that something would happen to Kelly.'

Nick squeezed her hand tightly, using their laced fingers to tug her back into his arms. 'It didn't,' he reminded her. 'Kelly's safe and so are you, you didn't even need me to come rescue you.'

Adalind made a sound that was part laugh part sob. 'I always need you.'

'Probably a god thing,' Nick's own words were choked with emotion. 'I was a mess without you.'

He let Hank and Wu handle the uniforms when they arrived, let them deal with CSU and Renard. He stayed with Adalind as a paramedic checked her over and declared she was battered and bruised and a little dehydrated but she would be fine after some bed rest and a nice hot shower.

The idea of a shower made Adalind moan and Nick grinned. 'I have blood in my hair,' she complained. 'I feel disgusting.'

'You're still beautiful to me.' His easy words took her by surprise, especially because they were said in front of people he worked with, but he wanted her to see how much he meant them, he needed her to understand how serious he was about her. When he finally did tell her exactly how he felt he wanted the evidence to back it up so she couldn't just write it off like she had been "and with good reason. Because why should she believe he meant everything he said when he was always so hot and cold?

'I just want to go home and shower and hold Kelly and sleep,' she told him. 'Can I go home?' she asked the paramedic who nodded.

'You might want to check in with your GP in a few days, just to make sure, but everything looks okay to me,' the woman said with a smile. 'Just make sure she gets lots of fluids and she takes it easy,' she added to Nick.

He nodded and helped Adalind back to her feet and out of the back of the ambulance. 'Someone's going to want to take your statement but I could probably put it off until tomorrow.'

Adalind shook her head. 'I just want to get it over with.'

He understood how she felt and so he once more laced his fingers through hers and led her across the front yard to where Pogue was standing with Hank getting a better idea of what had happened. Monroe had left with Trubel before anyone could see them and start asking questions.

'I'll just take a quick statement for now Ms Schade but I'd like you to come down and give a full statement in a couple of days.'

Resigned to making an appearance at the station, Adalind gave them a brief account of everything that had happened to her over the last four days. Nick was glad for the contact of their hands because it reassured him that despite everything she'd been through she was standing there beside him able to give a statement.

'I don't really remember the accident,' she told Pogue and therefore Nick and Hank. 'I think they kept me drugged the first couple of days and then when I woke up I didn't know where I was and I didn't recognise anyone I saw. It took me ages to figure out how to get out of the basement and when I finally did Nick was already here.'

Pogue asked a few more questions and tried to get as many details as possible but without an understanding of what was there just wasn't more to tell. If they'd really kept her locked up the whole time, and Nick definitely believed they had, then Adalind wasn't going to be able to give them any more information than she'd given Detective Pogue, it was just her escape that would be different.

They'd all pretty much agreed to the story that most of the guards had been dead when they arrived and that the few who weren't were responsible for all the blood and chaos. Nick wasn't sure Pogue bought the story, especially not after the last case he'd worked with Hank had made him suspicious of their conduct, but it was a lot easier to explain than Adalind systematically slaughtering and subduing her captors with her powers (and occasionally her bare hands) as she tried to get away.

It was a couple more hours of questions and driving before Adalind finally got to have a shower. When she emerged clean and dressed in warm fluffy pyjamas and another set of fuzzy socks he had Kelly waiting to meet her. Rosalee and Monroe had dropped him off while she'd been scrubbing, although Rosalee had wanted to stay, she'd understood it was late and that for one night Nick just needed it to be the three of them.

The moment Adalind closed her arms around Kelly was when she started to cry.

He helped her dry her hair while she held Kelly tight enough that if he hadn't been just as happy to see his mom he might have complained. Adalind didn't say a word as he finished off her hair and combed out the last of the tangles, he didn't really expect her to. She would talk when she was ready; right now all she needed was to know she was home and safe with Kelly in her arms.

He helped her into bed, tugging off her stupid socks and then crawled in beside her. With Kelly safely nestled between them Nick felt calm for the first time in days. For the first time since he'd realised Adalind was gone the weight on his chest had lifted and he could finally breathe easily.

Adalind lay on her side facing him, her face pressed close against Kelly, and he slipped down the bed to mirror her position. He lifted one hand and gently brushed hair away from her face. She opened her eyes and looked at him and he felt that lump form in his throat again.

'I don't ever want to lose you,' he whispered, not at all surprised to find his voice thick with tears he would never let fall. The look she gave him in response made his stomach lurch with guilt. She looked so surprised by his words, so full of wonder that he was even saying them, that he wished he could go back in time and kick the Nick of just a few months ago.

He would spend the rest of his life proving to her the truth of his words if he had to.

'I love you,' she told him and though the words didn't look any easier for her to say than they had the first time, she still said them with a level of ease he envied.

'Adalind,' he breathed her name on a sigh, he wanted to say it back, wanted to tell her the million different things he'd come to realise since she'd been gone but lying there with their son between them he knew it wasn't the right time. He didn't want the words tainted by his fear, didn't want her brushing them off as an attempt to make her feel safe and secure after everything she'd been through.

No, when Nick finally told her he needed her to know he was saying the words because he wanted to, because he needed to, not because they were what she wanted to hear.

'Thank you for coming for me,' she told him, cutting off any attempt he might have made to give her some sort of response.

This Nick could at least respond to with complete honesty. 'I will _always _come for you.'

He lay there stroking a hand gently up and down her side until she finally drifted off. It didn't take long before he followed and for the first time in days his sleep was deep and dreamless.

He woke before Adalind. Between them Kelly lay awake just watching his mother as though he was afraid she would disappear. How much of what had happened did he understand? He'd missed Adalind just as much as Nick had but did he see her back now and know she wasn't going to be taken away again?

'She's not going anywhere,' he told his son, rubbing his belly. 'I'm not going to let anyone take her from us ever again.'

He thought his words might wake her but Adalind slept on. He thought about getting up, about getting dressed and all the things he probably should have been doing but he didn't. Work and the rest of the world could just wait. Todayâ€¦ today he was going to hide away with his family and enjoy the fact that Adalind was alive and safe.

He did have to get up at one point to change Kelly and grab a bottle but he slipped back into bed before Adalind could wake and find them gone. He wasn't sure how she managed to sleep through the sound of Kelly noisily slurping away right in her ear but the sight made him smile and for the first time he found himself reaching for his phone to capture the moment.

It was the first time he'd ever really felt like he wanted to or that he could, but this was his family, as screwed up as their pasts were and as unbelievable as the relationship they had was, this was the family Nick had always wanted and he was going to do everything he could to keep it.

Adalind slept well into the afternoon and although Nick got up occasionally to tend to Kelly's needs (and a few of his own), Nick was content to lie in bed and wait for her to wake. He couldn't remember the last time he'd had such a lazy day and he found himself hoping there would be more like it in the future.

He sent texts to Monroe and Rosalee, to Hank, Wu and Trubel (she'd given him a new number that actually worked) and one to Bud letting everyone know Adalind was okay and that they would see everyone tomorrow.

When Adalind finally did wake, he was reading to Kelly from the first _Harry Potter _book. 'Don't you think he's a bit young for that?' she murmured.

He paused his reading and turned his head to look at her. 'I'm not

reading the scary bits aloud,' he whispered. 'Is this your copy or mine?' he asked, flipping to look at the cover, the banality of their conversation was oddly soothing.

'Yours,' she replied, 'I'm pretty sure mines still in the storage locker.'

Amused that she'd kept her childhood copies of Harry Potter in with all of her hexenbiest stuff he told her what he'd found out about her mother's estate while she'd be gone which led to telling her about having to buy a new car which somehow tumbled into a conversation about new furniture which finally had Adalind asking the question she'd been much too tired to ask the night (morning? It had been pretty late when they'd finally gotten home) before.

'What happened to our wall?'

'I threw a chair at it,' Nick admitted sheepishly.

Adalind raised her eyebrow but pointed out, 'A chair wouldn't have caused such a big hole.'

'No,' Nick admitted. 'But throwing the chair felt really good so I hit it a few more times. Some of the bricks were loose and then I discovered there's a whole other loft on the other side of the wall, it must sit over the loading area next door.'

'Another loft?'

Nick nodded, now that he wasn't attacking the thing with a sledgehammer fuelled by rage, he was actually quite excited by the discovery. 'This place was only ever supposed to be temporary, there isn't really room for Kelly to have his own space when he gets older but, well, I'm pretty sure we could turn the loft next door into a couple of bedrooms, maybe even create an office space for when â€" if â€" you decide to go back to work.' He paused before adding the best part. 'There's another bathroom over there.'

She'd been looking a bit dubious about his plans until he mentioned the second bathroom. It hadn't been much of a problem since they'd become more comfortable sharing the small space but Kelly would grow up one day and he would definitely need his own bathroom. If Meisner ever gave him more information on Diana's whereabouts then she would need a space of her own too.

He hadn't really asked about the packing and loading areas of the attached warehouse. It had been part of the factory and he'd been happy enough with the knowledge that nobody would be coming to use the space. Once he'd seen the loft he hadn't felt the need to ask about it. The loft had everything they'd needed at the time; it was functional, secure and came with a potential escape route and a surprisingly good view.

At the time he hadn't needed anything more but now, thinking about a future with Adalind, Nick could see the need for more space and he liked the idea of getting it right where they were. They were safe here, away from the people who wanted to hurt them. Isn't that what Eve had said, that Kelly and Diana would need a safe home?

Standing in the makeshift doorway, with her moments later, Nick could

see that Adalind saw the potential in the space as well. It would take a lot of work and it wouldn't be easy, not when they would have to do it all themselves (with the occasional help from their friends) but it would be worth it.

And standing there, looking at a vision of his future gave Nick the perfect opening to tell Adalind what he'd realised while she'd been gone.

'I know I've told you this before,' he began, 'but I want you to understand. When I think about the future you're not just in it, Adalind, you're it. I don't know how we got here, not really, not when we should hate each other and be trying to kill each other, but I know that even though everything says we shouldn't work, we do. I may not know how to say it so that you'll believe me, not after everything we've done to each other " I don't know how you can say it " but I do love you and this,' he gestured at the mostly open empty space, 'this is how I see my future.'

He stepped through the rough doorway and pointed to one end that at the moment was just kind of an alcove. 'That's Kelly's room.' He walked to the other side where he could already imagine walls going up and dividing the space. 'This? This could be Diana's.' He gestured around him. Whoever had originally started the conversion on these two spaces had obviously never gotten further than sectioning the area off from the warehouse below and that worked in their favour. 'They can fight over the bathroom and here,' he gestured widely. 'This could be a study or even another bedroom.' He wasn't quite ready to bring up the possibility of more children in their future but he wanted her to know that it was something they could talk about.

At some point, Adalind had started to cry. The way she was looking at him made him feel twelve feet tall and like he could do anything. He wasn't sure what it was exactly that had started her tears but they were happy tears and he was okay with that.

'I want this future with you,' he reiterated firmly, crossing the room to take her hands and draw her into the new space. 'I want you, Adalind, and everything that comes with that. The good and the bad.'

He watched her walk through the space and remembered the expression on her face when he'd first shown her the loft. She'd been so sceptical and unimpressed with his choice but she'd come to love the space " he'd actually gotten her to admit that once. This time, looking around this space there was no wariness, no hesitation, just as he had, Adalind was looking at this space and seeing the potential future.

'It'll take a lot of work,' she murmured, turning back to look at him. 'I think there might be something living in the bathroom.'

Nick laughed, moving to slide his arm around her waist and tugged her close. 'It'll be worth it.'

For a long time he stood there with her, looking around the second loft and thinking about what they could do with it. He wasn't even really sure how they'd make it work, what did he really know about building walls and running cabling for power through a building? That

didn't mean he wouldn't learn (well, maybe he'd leave some of it to a professional, there must be someone they could trust â€" he'd find someone).

It was Adalind who finally broke the silence. 'We're going to need a garden on the roof.'

That was not at all what he was expecting. 'What?'

'I know there's not much space up there but our kids are going to need some fresh air occasionally.'

'That's what parks are for,' he pointed out and then, because standing there talking about something as silly and normal as a space for Kelly and any potential future siblings to play was exactly what he needed after the last four days, he leant down and captured her lips in a kiss.

'What was that for?' she wondered, slightly breathless.

'I wanted to.' He smiled and then grinned. 'Let's get some food and then I'll tell you about getting to punch Renard in the face.'

He slipped away from her and headed back toward the misshapen doorway and the kitchen.

'You what?' she called after him.

'Yep!' he confirmed, sticking his head back through the doorway. 'And I had a really strange conversation with Eve, too.'

Adalind tilted her head and frowned. 'Aren't all conversations with Eve strange?' But she followed him back into the loft and took a seat at the counter while he started putting together a meal.

Nick didn't know when she'd be ready to tell him everything about her time with Black Claw but he was happy to let her take comfort in listening to him talk while he put together some sandwiches. Besides, he kind of thought she'd appreciate hearing about him punching Renard and the knowledge that Eve seemed to think Diana would become part of their lives.

At least, he hoped that's what she'd been implying when she'd said they'd both need a safe place. Diana would always be a part of Adalind's life and although he felt guilty (really, really guilty) for his part in taking her away, that wasn't the only reason he was so willing to look for her. Diana was important to Adalind and so she was important to Nick. And what about Kelly? Didn't he deserve to know his sister? Didn't they both deserve a chance to have a relationship?

He tried to make the afternoon and evening as normal as possible for Adalind. He didn't want to highlight what had happened to her but he also didn't want to ignore it. He wasn't used to making things better for her, he didn't know the right steps to make it easier. He didn't know what Black Claw had done to her but he did know that Adalind was strong. She'd been held against her will before, she'd made deals and she'd fought to save herself. It wasn't that she was used to this kind of thing it was just that like him, she didn't have a normal view of the world.

She got scared sometimes, and given what she'd been through he didn't blame her, but she was frankly the bravest person he knew and so he didn't know if he was supposed to hold her and talk to her or just ignore the whole thing.

Juliette would have wanted the comfort, she would have wanted to know she was safe and she'd want to talk about what happened. Even if it weren't with him, she'd have talked to one of her friends. She'd have wanted to make sense of what had happened to her and the things she'd done to protect herself.

With Adalind, Nick had no idea. He'd held her when she'd reached for him (he'd like to think that his touch helped) but she also hadn't talked about it. After she'd given Pogue her statement it was as though she was done talking about it.

It wasn't an unfamiliar attitude, he tended to just brush these things aside but he wasn't sure if that was the nature of a Grimm and the work he did or a normal reaction.

In the end, he just asked her. They were back in bed, this time it was actually to sleep and not just because it was warm and they were being lazy, and because most of their important conversations seemed to start there, he broached the topic with blunt honesty.

'Are you okay? Should I be doing something? It feels like I haven't done enough.'

He was lying on his back fiddling with the ends of her hair as she rested her head on his chest and so she had to lift her head slightly to look at him. When she started talking her words were quiet and he'd have been worried about that if her eyes hadn't been looking at him with something he'd like to label as wonder but that didn't exactly make sense.

'They didn't hurt me. Not really,' she added when his eyes raked over her scrapes and bruises disbelievingly. 'Most of this happened when I was trying to escape. They gave me food and water and actually let me use the bathroom so that's already way better than when Viktor locked me in the dudgeon.'

If her words were supposed to comfort him or offer some sort of explanation he wasn't sure she'd succeeded. He did know that if he ever saw Viktor again he'd do a lot more than punch the Royal in the face. He'd seen where Adalind had spent her first nights, felt what she'd been feeling when she'd first been trapped there, the reminder just served to make him angry, it didn't reassure him that she was okay after this new experience.

Adalind shrugged. 'I'm okay, Nick,' she told him. 'Oh, there'll be nightmares but it wasn't being locked away that scared me, it was not knowing Kelly was safe.'

He supposed that made sense. She was a lot stronger than most people gave her credit for and so he'd accept her words now, believe her when she said she was okay and simply hold her when she reached for him.

And he'd take it as a good sign that he was worried enough about how

to help her that he'd actually asked.

That didn't mean he wasn't relieved to know that while he went back to work the next day, she was planning to spend the day with Rosalee. He'd come out of the bathroom, fresh from the shower to find she'd already talked to their friend and plans had been made. The fact that she didn't have a car meant that either he'd have to take her or Rosalee would have to come and get her. Either way, she wouldn't be driving alone for a while and that eased some of the fear that seemed to have taken up permanent residence in his chest.

'I'd like to come in to work with you,' Adalind said, she kept her gaze down as she changed Kelly but Nick didn't think it was because she was genuinely absorbed by the task. He got the feeling she didn't want him to see her expression. 'That way I can give my proper statement and then Rosalee can come and get me or if you're not busy you could maybe drop me off at the Spice Shop.'

She looked up at him and there wasn't fear like he was expecting, it was concern. About him. Adalind didn't want him worrying about her, didn't want him thinking about the accident while he was at work. _She _was genuinely concerned about how _he_ would feel with her out of his sight.

The thought blew him away and the words were out of his mouth before he had a chance to filter them. 'Assuming we're both not dead, I'm going to ask you to marry me in six months.'

Adalind dropped the bottle of baby powder she'd just picked up, sending a cloud of fine white powder into the air. She was frozen, staring at him as though she was absolutely sure she'd just imagined those words. _He _was frozen as well. Sure he'd been thinking about it, thinking about it wasn't actually doing it but, well, she was worried about him. She'd been attacked, dragged " literally " kicking and shouting from her car and locked in a cell for four days and now that she was back where she felt safe she was worried about him.

That was just so Adalind, so very much the woman she was becoming that he couldn't not say the words.

How was it that she turned him into such a mess? It was like, when it came to Adalind, Nick's brain went on vacation. And it had always been like that. Every encounter between them had always been emotionally driven. They'd always been reckless " when they hated each other and when they loved " but it was like when it came to Adalind heart overrode mind in every matter.

God, he'd dismissed the threat of Black Claw and threatened to kill a lot of people. He'd tortured someone just to find her. He'd observed once that if anyone took Kelly from them they'd possibly burn Portland to the ground trying to find him, and given the way he'd been behaving, he honestly could see that happening. Given much longer, he might have destroyed a decent chunk of it to find Adalind.

And wow was that unhealthy.

Adalind found her voice first " didn't she always? 'Nick,' but she floundered. 'What?'

He crossed the space between them, not even caring that he'd just stepped in a pile of baby powder that he'd probably end up tracking all through the loft which would have her yelling at him to clean it up. He reached up, took her face in his hands and kissed her.

Kissed her like he was sure he'd never kissed anyone in his life. He needed her to know, to understand that he was serious. That he was equally terrified of this thing they had and excited. Excited because as reckless and destructive, as unhealthy and all consuming as their relationship was becoming, it was very them.

They never did anything half way, why should their future be any different?

He'd have happily stood there in the middle of a mess of baby powder and kissed her for hours but Kelly took exception to lying in the middle of the change table naked and so he had to take a step back. He had to take a deep breath and let her go.

'I meant that,' he told her. 'And I would happily spend all day proving it to you but I really do have to go to work.'

Adalind still seemed dazed but Kelly made another sound of protest and she snapped out of it. 'Nick,' she murmured, gaze once more focused on Kelly. 'In six months, when you ask me, I'm going to say yes.'

End
file.